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Female perspective on politics: female political representation in the Netherlands and Finland

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Abstract

Female political representation differs significantly between countries. Patriarchal structures and gender biases that hinder women's representation are pervasive and can be identified in seemingly progressive governments, challenging claims of increased gender equality in the global North. This thesis explores the differences in female political representation in parliament between two popularly deemed progressive European countries: the Netherlands and Finland. It does so by adopting a novel approach and engaging with the top-down personal perspective of politicians within parliament. Using semi-structured elite interviews, this thesis focuses on the causes for the gap in female political representation between these countries while also discussing what the interviewees envision as possible improvements. The parliamentarians provided unique insights into how gender stereotypes, gatekeeping, and unpaid care work determine the level of women's political representation. The results indicate that female parliamentarians, next to having more role models, centred childcare and parental leave at the core of the policies to address the disparity in female representation between the Netherlands and Finland and increase female political representation overall. This thesis thus contributes to gender and political studies.

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Introduction

It's just a strange world; almost all the clichés you know about the House of Representatives and about national politics are correct.

– Sandra Beckerman, Dutch MP for Socialist Party (SP)[1]

Gender relations have drastically changed over time, and concepts such as patriarchy, women's rights and gender have developed significantly. Within feminist and gender studies, several academics have analysed the relationship between the sexes and genders in relation to equality over time.[2] The position of women in society has also evolved significantly over time. Starting in the Middle Ages, women started being chastised and put in positions of dependence in relation to their male family members.[3] This evolved over the following centuries to the point where women had very few rights as independent people.[4] Their rights were not just limited in the social sphere but also in the political sphere. This started to change in the middle of the 19th century when women's movements started campaigning for more rights, particularly for suffrage.[5] These movements started gaining more ground in Europe and had their first win when Finland granted women the right to vote in 1906.[6] Other European countries, like the Netherlands, followed more than a decade later.[7]

Although the vote was a significant step towards equality between men and women, it was only the first step in a longer process. Other rights were still not granted and women were held back in both political and social life, including their economic rights such as employment.[8] This is even more visible in one of the earliest slogans from feminists 'the personal is political' with which they tried to indicate that suffrage would influence every aspect of their life.[9] While women could be elected and cast their vote, representation for women lagged behind and still

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[1] January 2021

[2] Shields, 'Passionate Men, Emotional Women'; Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Boyd and Primitive Accumulation*; Patil, 'From Patriarchy to Intersectionality'; Verloo and Lombardo, 'Contested Gender Equality and Policy Variety in Europe: Introducing a Critical Frame Analysis Approach'; Knight and Brinton, 'One Egalitarianism or Several?'; Hochschild and Machung, *The Second Shift*.

[3] Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Boyd and Primitive Accumulation*.

[4] Federici; Shields, 'Passionate Men, Emotional Women'.

[5] Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century : A European Perspective*.

[6] Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker; Holli and Kantola, 'A Politics for Presence: State Feminism, Women's Movements and Political Representation in Finland'.

[7] Bosch, 'History and Historiography of First-Wave Feminism in the Netherlands, 1860-1922'.

[8] Wodak, 'Multiple Identities: The Roles of Female Parliamentarians in the EU Parliament'; Verloo, 'Making Women Count in the Netherlands'; Orloff, 'Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship'; Anttonen, 'The Female Working Citizen: Social Rights, Work and Motherhood in Finland'.

[9] Moller Okin, 'Gender the Public and the Private', 123.

does compared to men's representation.[10] Currently, within Western Europe, the amount of female representation in national parliaments ranges from 21% in Greece to 46% in Sweden.[11] This divide can be explained by multiple factors, not the least of which is cultural. Cultural ideas about gender roles can influence the levels of representation, voting behaviour of the general public, and women's willingness to enter politics.[12] Therefore, culture is important to consider when discussing political representation, especially when looking from the female perspective. Political representation differs significantly within Western Europe.[13] Today, women in Western Europe are still fighting for equal rights in a similar way they did a century ago, however, one of the main issues currently is acquiring equal political representation.

This thesis researches the lack of equal political representation in Western Europe by analysing and comparing two seemingly progressive[14] European countries as case studies, namely, the Netherlands and Finland. These case studies are chosen because of their comparable political systems, socio-economic level of society and their image as progressive, while they differ considerably in their amount of female representation and how they tackle equality in politics.[15] For example, the Netherlands has significantly less women in parliament than Finland.[16] Their differences and similarities make for an interesting comparison and could give new insights in the field of gender and political studies. The case selection will be further outlined in the methodology.

Female representation and the way it has progressed over time significantly differs between Finland and the Netherlands.[17] Multiple studies have researched why female representation at

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[10] Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 'The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation, 1893–2003'.

[11] Worldbank, 'Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (%) - Sweden, Greece, European Union | Data'.

[12] Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'.

[13] Verloo, *Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality: A Critical Frame Analysis of Gender Policies in Europe*.

[14] Seemingly progressive is used here because both countries are described by various media outlets as progressive in terms of their freedom, their considerably liberal laws, and relatively good measures of equality. See 'Safe, Happy and Free'; Statistics Finland, 'Finland among the Best in the World'; 'Election Interview'.

[15] Herderscheê, 'Aandeel vrouwen in de Kamer stijgt naar 39 procent'; Knight and Brinton, 'One Egalitarianism or Several?'

[16] 'Finnish Parliamentary Elections'; Herderscheê, 'Aandeel vrouwen in de Kamer stijgt naar 39 procent'.

[17] Verloo, 'Making Women Count in the Netherlands'; Oldersma, 'High Tides in a Low Country: Gendering Political Representation in the Netherlands'; Koning, 'Women for Women's Sake'; Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'; Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'; Kantola and Lombardo, 'Populism and Feminist Politics'; Sulkunen, 'Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship in Finland'; Anttonen, 'The Female Working Citizen: Social Rights, Work and Motherhood in Finland'.

the national level is a difficult process to complete. [18] Still, not many have focused on comparing two, arguably progressive, European countries and why there is a difference in equality between these countries. Furthermore, female politicians' voices are often not included in these studies, while they could provide valuable inside from a practical point of view. This thesis focuses on comparing Finland and the Netherlands and will include female politicians' views on the cause of this discrepancy. The question that will be the point of discussion is **"what are the causes for the disparity in female political representation between the Netherlands and Finland from a top-down perspective and how can this be improved?"** This will be answered through elite in-depth interviews with female politicians from the parliaments of both countries. Having an inside point of view from the female representatives will be valuable for uncovering underlying causes and acquiring ideas for improvement.

There are different types of representation. In contemporary literature, there is generally a distinction made between the following three types: symbolic, substantive, and descriptive representation.[19] Symbolic representation is the image that representatives present and the beliefs they display. Substantive representation is the relationship between the represented and the representative, where the representative must listen to the represented. Lastly, descriptive representation describes the relationship between the characteristic of the represented group and the representative.[20] These forms of representation are discussed both generally and concerning female representation.[21] It is argued that descriptive representation would improve female representation the most, because it focuses on the characteristics and number of representatives for a group, in this case women.[22] Therefore, the focus in this thesis is on descriptive representation. This will be further outlined in the conceptual framework. Besides different forms of representation, research has also shown that systems with proportional representation

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[18] Moller Okin, 'Gender the Public and the Private'; Bourque and Grossholtz, 'Politics an Unnatural Practice: Political Science Looks at Female Participation'; Mansbridge, 'Feminism and Democracy'; Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'.

[19] Celis et al., 'Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation'; Karp and Banducci, 'When Politics Is Not Just a Man's Game'; Coffé, 'Conceptions of Female Political Representation'.

[20] Celis et al., 'Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation'.

[21] Latner and McGann, 'Geographical Representation under Proportional Representation'; Wolbrecht and Campbell, 'Leading by Example'; Lovenduski et al., 'Conclusions'; Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'; Koning, 'Women for Women's Sake'; Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'.

[22] Wolbrecht and Campbell, 'Leading by Example'; Lovenduski et al., 'Conclusions'; Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'; Koning, 'Women for Women's Sake'; Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'; Kantola and Lombardo, 'Populism and Feminist Politics'.

or a hybrid system have tended to produce better representation for women.[23] Both countries discussed in this thesis have incorporated proportional representation in their governments.

The way in which gender is viewed has to be addressed here shortly before moving forward. In order to get a specific experience knowledge-based perspective, this thesis looks solely at the female perspective on equality and representation. Therefore, it is vital to mention how gender is defined. A clear distinction needs to be made between sex and gender; sex is the biological aspect of a person, while gender is a social construct that ties together with traits like masculinity and femininity.[24] This thesis looks at gender, with a focus on women, which will be conceptualised further in the conceptual framework.

In the following chapter, my positionality will be discussed. Following this, the state of the art is outlined, which includes literature predominantly from the 1970s to present. This time frame was chosen because the second wave of the women's movement in Western Europe mostly started in the 1970s. The second wave saw women actively fight for more personal and labour rights, resulting in more independence for women.[25] Thus, research from this time period is valuable to examine for the purpose of this thesis. Next, the methodology will be discussed and the choice for the use of elite interviews will be explained. After this, the conceptual framework will be outlined. Subsequently, the research results will be discussed, analysed, and placed within the relevant literature. Lastly, a conclusion will be drawn, in which the research question posed above will be answered and reflections on possible future research will be given.

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[23] Bird, 'The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities'.
[24] Pryzgoda and Chrisler, 'Definitions of Gender and Sex: The Subtleties of Meaning'; Krook, 'Studying Political Representation'.
[25] Verloo, *Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality: A Critical Frame Analysis of Gender Policies in Europe*; Snyder, 'What Is Third-Wave Feminism?'

Positionality

Positionality describes the point of view that each individual holds and involves becoming aware of the effect of this view on the research.[26] This means that a researcher's gender, social class, race, political allegiance, ethnicity, and historical and geographical location all shape their perspective.[27] Positionality is imperative to discuss within this research considering it also influences the way others are viewed.[28] Awareness of this within research creates a reflexive approach that acknowledges that researches are not situated outside the social world they study.[29] Therefore, addressing my positionality is essential within this research. I will first outline my own position and what place I hold within this society, describing my own (possible) biases. Following this, I will reflect on how these biases could have impacted my research and the steps I took to remain aware of them and account for them.

First, addressing my own positionality means reviewing the topic I chose. I consider myself a feminist and have been intrigued by the increasing number of female leaders in my home country, the Netherlands, over the past year. Through news articles and other media's focus on increasing female representation in Dutch politics, I wondered how far representation had come and how it compared to other countries. In addition to this, Finland has been widely discussed in the media due to their historical instalment of a young female prime minister and the accompanying female-led coalition. Considering these two countries, I became intrigued to know more about my own country and a country that has been portrayed as feminist and progressive in the last year. Through this, I hoped to learn more about the development of female representation and the workings of politics within two Western European countries.

Moreover, addressing my own positionality means that I have to be aware of how my socio-political standing as well as my privilege within race, gender, and geographical location, can influence my research. First, recognising my socio-political standing, I grew up in a wealthy western country and have lived the predominant part of my life in wealthy western countries. Higher education was within my reach and I consider myself to reside within the progressive left-wing of the political spectrum. This can influence the way I view society and differing political views. Within gender and feminist research, the privilege of race and gender cannot be

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[26] Bourke, 'Positionality'; Holmes, 'Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide'.
[27] Holmes, 'Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide'.
[28] Holmes.
[29] Holmes.

ignored. Women's studies and a majority of feminist research puts the perspective of white woman at the centre.[30] Recognising this resulted in two things: first, recognising my privilege as a white woman and second, realising my privilege as a cis-gendered[31] woman. This privileged position means that, while I am in a minoritised group[32] being a woman, I cannot speak from the point of view of other minoritised groups within other races and genders. This has been imperative to recognise and consider throughout my research to realise a more nuanced study in which I confronted my biases during every part of this research by actively not generalising women and touching upon intersectionality in the interviews and analysis. Intersectionality reviews several aspects of identity, but a primary focus has been on the intersection of race and gender.[33] Therefore, when talking about intersectionality this thesis focuses on the intersectionality of race and gender.

While researching I recognised the limitation that came with this thesis' focus on female representation and its development in two western countries, namely not being able to account for other minoritised groups and the limited generalisability of this study to non-western countries. However, the views of female politicians are still valuable and can, to a certain extent, be applied to other Western European countries.

Recognising the influence feminism has had on me and incorporating this in my research gives a clear starting point in all aspects of my thesis. Shortly discussing the three feminist waves is important to clearly situate myself within them.[34] First wave feminism started in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and mainly called for suffrage and labour rights. Following this, second wave feminism did not begin until the 60s and 70s of the last century. Women started using identity politics in their appeals and realising patriarchal structures were at the root of the problem.[35] After the second wave gave more autonomy to women, third wave feminism strived to be more inclusive than the previous ones. In the 90s women started calling for experience-based feminism that erases gender divisions and includes everyday acts of

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[30] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness,and the Politics of Empowerment*.

[31] Assigned female at birth and still identifies as such.

[32] Following D'Ignazio and Klein, '1. The Power Chapter', 6., this thesis uses 'minoritised' to describe a group of people that "is actively devalued and oppressed by a dominant group, one that holds more economic, social and political power". In other words, a minoritized group does not have to be a minority, but is oppressed nonetheless.

[33] Nash, 'Re-Thinking Intersectionality'.

[34] These waves will be discussed in more detail in the literature review.

[35] Meijer, *Het persoonlijke wordt politiek*.

feminism.[36] In other words, women's experiences in everyday life were put at the forefront of the feminist debate.

In this thesis a clear distinction is made between gender and sex, which falls in line with third-wave feminists' arguments. However, while I do consider personal experiences, I do not refuse to encapsulate a shared female perspective which is the narrative of the third wave. While I recognise that women's experiences cannot be fully generalised to a universal concept, considering their experiences to shed a light on the discourse of female representation can provide important insights. Therefore, the notion that women's experiences cannot (partly) speak for a group or be used as a universal tool is rejected. Following this, I situate myself in between the arguments of both the second and third wave. Moreover, personal experiences from female parliamentarians are at the front in this analysis and I adhere to the inclusive terminology that was founded in the third-wave.

Finally, it should be noted that I took effort to remain aware of my biases throughout my research and to remain critical of every step I was taking. In the course of collecting the data, I refrained from sharing my opinions with the interviewees to prevent accidental influence. Moreover, both during the interviews as well as the analysis, I was receptive to how my own political views influenced the way I encountered the interviewees and considered their answers. Active consideration was given to every interview, to make sure to analyse each interview the same regardless of the political views of the politician. Finally, my point of view as a white cis-gendered woman limited my view on the intersectionality of race and gender within politics. Because of my privileged position on this matter, the discussion about the point of view of people of colour was solely done from an outsider perspective. As was noted by Bourke, true objectivity cannot be achieved in social sciences, that is why reflexivity is vital.[37] Recognising my positionality and remaining critical resulted in a more nuanced thesis that actively tried to reduce personal biases within the research.

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[36] Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 'The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation, 1893–2003'; Meijer, *Het persoonlijke wordt politiek*; Verloo, *Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality: A Critical Frame Analysis of Gender Policies in Europe*; Moller Okin, 'Gender the Public and the Private'; Snyder, 'What Is Third-Wave Feminism?'
[37] Bourke, 'Positionality'.

1. Literature review

1.1 Gender and equal representation

There is a wide variety of literature about gender, patriarchy, women's rights, and women's representation. The literature discussed here focuses on western democracies, which are somewhat limited in their generalisability,[38] but valuable for this study. First, examining the literature on gender provides an overview of how gender relations have been researched and evolved over time. Analysing the Middle Ages in Europe, Federici argues that a shift in gender relations started to take place between 1200 and 1500.[39] Before then, (older) women were generally more respected and seen as knowledgeable. She explains that from 1200 on, women started to be scapegoated because of their outspoken criticism of the ruling elite and men were instated as the leaders in both public institutions as well as the private institute of the home. In this way men were equated with government and power.[40] Similar to Federici, Patil explains that society in that time associated familial rule with political rule in which the family had absolute authority.[41] Within this structure, men were the head of the household and possessed the most power.[42] The process that occurred during these centuries consisted of the 'steady erosion of women's rights'[43] and made women completely dependent on the men in their lives. Shields resembles this argument and explains that during the mid-19th century, gender differences started to be rooted in biological arguments in combination with evolution theory.[44] The control and stereotypes about women that were established back then, are still present today and these deep-rooted concepts of gender differences were, and are, significantly beneficial for men.[45] In other words, patriarchal relations are visible in present-day Western Europe and are expressed on various levels, and reflected in the fact that in society women are, for example, still considered as less powerful in high-ranking positions.[46] The evolution in which women were being equated with inferior, non-public figures who should be bound to child bearing and

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[38] Krook, 'Studying Political Representation'.
[39] Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Boyd and Primitive Accumulation*.
[40] Federici.
[41] Patil, 'From Patriarchy to Intersectionality'.
[42] Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Boyd and Primitive Accumulation*.
[43] Federici, 100.
[44] Shields, 'Passionate Men, Emotional Women'.
[45] Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Boyd and Primitive Accumulation*.
[46] Walby, 'Comparative Analysis of Gender Relations in Employment in Western Europe'; Verloo and Lombardo, 'Contested Gender Equality and Policy Variety in Europe: Introducing a Critical Frame Analysis Approach'; Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Boyd and Primitive Accumulation*; Shields, 'Passionate Men, Emotional Women'; Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'.

housework, does not only have repercussions for the development of women's social rights but also for their political rights.[47]

The focus of gender studies has generally been on the role of society regarding women's rights, patriarchy, and suffrage. However, the state also played a role in describing, administering, and ultimately shaping gender relations and, in turn, women's rights.[48] Women have been trying to fight this gender division and gain equality since at least the mid-19th century when women's movements and protests became regular occurrences.[49] Over time, women's movements gained more ground in several Western European countries. This is seen as the first wave of feminism. These movements advocated for more rights for women in all aspects of life, but the main priority was women's suffrage.[50] Politics is an important instrument to govern every part of life and gaining suffrage meant women would be gaining an identity as political citizens. Moreover, suffrage mostly coincided with the right to be elected and thus engage in law-making.[51] However, there is an argument questioning how many rights women actually gained with suffrage, as gender norms shaped, and still shape, our society in a variety of ways.[52] One way to improve women's place in society and to counter the patriarchal gender norms, is to ensure women are represented in the political sphere. Therefore, the focus in this thesis is narrowed down to what came after suffrage, and is still evolving today, representation.

Historically, with the exception of New Zealand in 1893, countries did not give women the right to vote throughout the nineteenth century.[53] Moving into the twentieth century, Finland was the first country in Europe who granted women the right to vote in 1906.[54] The protests across western countries, as part of the first wave of feminism, continued and in the subsequent decade several other Western European countries followed, including the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, women could be elected to parliament in 1917, and they were granted the right to vote in 1919.[55] The difference of a decade between Finland and the Netherlands signifies how

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[47] Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Boyd and Primitive Accumulation*; Moller Okin, 'Gender the Public and the Private'.

[48] Orloff, 'Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship'.

[49] Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century : A European Perspective*.

[50] Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker; Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 'The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation, 1893–2003'.

[51] Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 'The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation, 1893–2003'.

[52] Orloff, 'Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship'.

[53] New Zealand History, 'New Zealand Women and the Vote - Women and the Vote'.

[54] Holli and Kantola, 'A Politics for Presence: State Feminism, Women's Movements and Political Representation in Finland'.

[55] Bosch, 'History and Historiography of First-Wave Feminism in the Netherlands, 1860-1922'.

Finland led the way in relation to female empowerment[56] and equality in politics, and arguably, still does.

After this first wave of feminism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Western Europe secured suffrage, and the right to get and education and a job, a second wave of feminism arose in the 1960s.[57] This second wave of feminism took place in the 1960s and 70s and focused more on identity politics.[58] Women recognised their identity was tied to and ingrained in patriarchal relations.[59] They fought for more personal rights such as reproductive rights and more services and products catered to women.[60] Finally, the third wave of feminism took place in the 1990s. This third wave picked claims from the previous waves and used them to form a new one. The phrase 'the personal is political', that was coined during the second wave, still prevailed in the third wave because women's personal experiences remained a core aspect on which they based their claims. What separates the third wave from the previous waves of feminism is their claim for more inclusivity, multiplicity, and a more personal narrative that showcases all different kinds of women.[61] Within this, third-wave feminism calls for the disappearance of the binary gender division and more attention to everyday acts of feminism.[62] Most of the gender literature considered in this thesis discusses concepts and arguments from the second and third wave of feminism.

1.2 Main concepts within gender and feminist literature

The previous section provided the historical background to the discussion of female representation and related it to feminism. This section will focus on conceptualizing the main concepts within gender and feminist literature, such as critical mass theory, gender quotas and feminist politics.

Gender literature prominently discusses the concept of patriarchy, using it to explain the gender oppression women have experienced and examining its remnants present in today's society.[63]

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[56] Bobo and Gilliam define political empowerment as "the extent to which a group has achieved significant representation and influence in political decision making". By applying it to female representation, it gives a good understanding of the concept of female empowerment. See Bobo and Gilliam, 'Race, Sociopolitical Participation, and Black Empowerment', 378."
[57] Meijer, *Het persoonlijke wordt politiek*.
[58] Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 'The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation, 1893–2003'.
[59] Meijer, *Het persoonlijke wordt politiek*.
[60] Verloo, 'Gender Knowledge, and Opposition to the Feminist Project'; Meijer, *Het persoonlijke wordt politiek*.
[61] Snyder, 'What Is Third-Wave Feminism?'
[62] Snyder.
[63] Patil, 'From Patriarchy to Intersectionality'; Verloo and Lombardo, 'Contested Gender Equality and Policy Variety in Europe: Introducing a Critical Frame Analysis Approach'; Hochschild and Machung, *The Second Shift*; Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 'The International Women's Movement and Women's Political

Gender itself is a contested topic because of the interchangeable use of sex and gender in political science and feminist literature.[64] Awareness of this has been shown in this thesis, and a fuller definition can be found in the conceptual framework below. Gender literature has signalled that gender equality has also been contested in numerous ways.[65] Most scholars refer to gender equality as meaning equality in representation and treatment for all genders.[66] The manner in which governments handle gender and gender quality, specifically women's place in society, has affected not only their ability to be independent from men and their family, but also their fight for social and political rights.[67] Moreover, governments' policies and the lack of female representation both have an impact on the evolvement of women's representation. Paxton and Kunovich explain that a lack of representation of women results in legislation that is catered to men.[68] While research on female representation and gender is increasingly interlinked, the debate on gender, gender equality and (female) representation specifically meets each other in discussions about gender quotas and the so-called critical mass theory.[69]

Critical mass theory describes how minority groups need to consist out of a 'critical mass' of people in order to influence in politics.[70] A critical mass in politics has been reached when a minority group becomes big enough to have influence and make changes in organisational behaviour.[71] This definition was created by Kanter[72] in 1993 and subsequently adopted and coined by the United Nations (UN).[73] The critical mass was set at 30% and later officially adopted by the UN in 1995. A critical mass of 30% of women was deemed necessary in politics to have fair representation.[74] Critical mass theory goes further than just fair representation, according to Childs and Krook, who explain that critical mass theory also shows how women

Representation, 1893–2003'; Lombardo et al., 'Taming the Male Sovereign? Framing Gender Inequality in Politics in the European Union and the Member States'.

[64] Krook, 'Studying Political Representation'; Delphy, 'Rethinking Sex and Gender'.

[65] Verloo and Lombardo, 'Contested Gender Equality and Policy Variety in Europe: Introducing a Critical Frame Analysis Approach'.

[66] Verloo and Lombardo; Hagqvist, Gådin, and Nordenmark, 'Work–Family Conflict and Well-Being Across Europe'; van de Vijver, 'Cultural and Gender Differences in Gender-Role Beliefs, Sharing Household Task and Child-Care Responsibilities, and Well-Being Among Immigrants and Majority Members in The Netherlands'; Rubery, 'Austerity and the Future for Gender Equality in Europe'.

[67] Orloff, 'Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship'.

[68] Kunovich and Paxton, 'Pathways to Power'.

[69] Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 'The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation, 1893–2003'; Kunovich, Paxton, and Hughes, 'Gender in Politics'; Lombardo et al., 'Taming the Male Sovereign? Framing Gender Inequality in Politics in the European Union and the Member States'; Childs and Krook, 'Critical Mass Theory and Women's Political Representation'.

[70] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'.

[71] Raaum.

[72] Mentioned in Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'.

[73] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'.

[74] Raaum.

do not represent women unless they form a significant enough minority.[75] The argument goes that up until the critical mass, women do not have enough power to stand up for women's problems.[76] One of the tools to achieve this critical mass is through gender quotas. Besides critical mass theory and gender quotas, another important concept is feminist politics.[77] Feminism and feminist politics have both been used in research about female representation because the aim for more female representation is seen as mostly a feminist struggle, while not everyone views it as inherently feminist.[78] Feminist politics can be defined as "actions that aim to transform unequal gendered power relations, norms and practices through the politicization of gender issues and the empowerment of women".[79] However, one does not need to identify as a feminist in order to promote feminist views. Excluding actions from people who place themselves outside of the feminist framework, makes it seem as if plurality within feminism does not exist. Moreover, there remains a stigma on the word 'feminist', therefore not everyone is comfortable using the term or identifying with it, even though their ideas might align.[80] Besides this, equality struggles are not limited to women's representation. Other minoritised groups are also fighting for equality, meaning that promoting equal representation does not mean that equality has been reached with just women's representation. Therefore, awareness to what type of equality is referenced is vital.

1.3 Barriers to female representation

Having discussed the main concepts, this section discusses the development of female political representation and the barriers that prevent it from increasing.

Several authors focus on how female political representation has developed or why there is an absence of representation in some countries.[81] A variety of possible barriers and causes are discussed which have influenced female representation. Hessami and da Fonseca identify four main theories that explain why women are underrepresented in politics: women may be less inclined to run for office due to the norms and traditional gender roles in society, voters are

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[75] Childs and Krook, 'Critical Mass Theory and Women's Political Representation'.
[76] Childs and Krook.
[77] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'; Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'; Malami and Kenworthy, 'Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis'.
[78] Campbell, Childs, and Lovenduski, 'Do Women Need Women Representatives?'; Moller Okin, 'Gender the Public and the Private'; Mansbridge, 'Feminism and Democracy'; Lovenduski, *State Feminism and Political Representation*; Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'.
[79] Kantola and Lombardo, 'Populism and Feminist Politics', 1110.
[80] Anastosopoulos and Desmarais, 'By Name or by Deed?'
[81] Celis et al., 'Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation'; Holli and Kantola, 'A Politics for Presence: State Feminism, Women's Movements and Political Representation in Finland'.

biased against female candidates, party leaders are biased against women, and, finally, institutional barriers prevent the further growth of female representation.[82] These four theories almost fully encompass the arguments present in the existing literature.

Hessami and da Fonseca have looked at the different representation types to decipher which type of representation (as discussed in the introduction[83]) is the most effective to improve female representation or which type of representation has not yet been implemented effectively.[84] Descriptive representation is mentioned as the most important type for increasing female representation because, as mentioned above, it focuses on the characteristics and number of representatives for a group, in this case women.[85] Substantive representation was cited occasionally as well, but this could be influenced by descriptive representation as the number of representatives influences the relationship between the represented and the representative.[86] In other words, through emphasising descriptive representation, the literature emphasises the need for role models to increase female representation.[87]

Another argument focuses on the cultural influence on representation, a major influence being religion.[88] Several major religions have placed women in a place of inferiority, which has subsequently influenced their place in society.[89] Both due to the rise of capitalism in the 19th century and the strong hold of the Christian church in Western Europe in the last two centuries, a more patriarchal society evolved, placing women at the bottom of the population.[90] This created traditional gender stereotypes which Lombardo et al. describe as 'the active male citizen and the inactive female citizen who has a problem with the functioning of democracy'.[91] These stereotypes are currently used to blame women for their lack of participation in politics, instead of looking at the patriarchal environment these women live in.[92]

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[82] Hessami and da Fonseca, 'Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies'.
[83] See page 3
[84] Celis et al., 'Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation'.
[85] Wolbrecht and Campbell, 'Leading by Example'; Lovenduski et al., 'Conclusions'; Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'; Koning, 'Women for Women's Sake'; Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'; Kantola and Lombardo, 'Populism and Feminist Politics'; Hessami and da Fonseca, 'Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies'.
[86] Koning, 'Women for Women's Sake'.
[87] Wolbrecht and Campbell, 'Leading by Example'; Hessami and da Fonseca, 'Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies'.
[88] Kunovich, Paxton, and Hughes, 'Gender in Politics'.
[89] Kunovich, Paxton, and Hughes.
[90] Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Boyd and Primitive Accumulation*; Kunovich, Paxton, and Hughes, 'Gender in Politics'.
[91] Lombardo et al., 'Taming the Male Sovereign? Framing Gender Inequality in Politics in the European Union and the Member States', 86.
[92] Lombardo et al., 'Taming the Male Sovereign? Framing Gender Inequality in Politics in the European Union and the Member States'.

The patriarchal argument ties in with the cultural norms that prevail in a country which form a barrier for female representation.[93] Culture dictates for a large part how women are perceived and influence if a woman is free to seek political representation and power.[94] As mentioned, religion is a significant part of this, which we will discuss further later on when discussing the Netherlands.[95] All these ideas are rooted in patriarchal constructs. These patriarchal norms can still be seen in contemporary politics when looking at the division of policy fields. Female ministers generally get the more 'socio-cultural' ministerial positions instead of ministries such as finance or foreign affairs, compared to their male counterparts.[96]

Connected to the arguments that take critical mass theory and cultural norms into account, is the argument about the role political parties play in gatekeeping female representation. Multiple scholars argue that the gatekeeping role of political parties is a major obstruction to realising higher percentages of female representation.[97] In many Western European countries, including Finland and the Netherlands, political parties construct a candidate list for upcoming elections. Next to having women's names on the list, the order of these names on the candidate list determines whether someone gets an elected seat in parliament.[98] If women are placed at the bottom of candidate lists, while male candidates take up the first twenty spots, the female candidates are only likely to get into office if a party wins more than twenty seats. The number of seats a party wins not only varies per party but also for each election. Thus, candidate selectors have significant influence on whether women get into parliament. However, many different arguments have been used in the past for not putting women higher on the candidate lists. First, academics argue that there is more willingness from left-wing parties to select women because of their less conservative roots.[99] This skews the representation ideologically. Second, parties contend that there are not enough women that want to be in politics, therefore creating a 'supply-side' problem.[100] The third argument shows the other side of the coin in arguing that parties refuse to select women as candidates because voters would not vote for

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[93] Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'.
[94] Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 'The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation, 1893–2003'.
[95] Paxton, Hughes, and Green; Kunovich, Paxton, and Hughes, 'Gender in Politics'.
[96] Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'.
[97] Kantola; Bird, 'The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities'; Lovenduski et al., 'Conclusions'; Kunovich and Paxton, 'Pathways to Power'; Verloo, 'Making Women Count in the Netherlands'; Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.
[98] Bird, 'The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities'; Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.
[99] Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'; Kunovich and Paxton, 'Pathways to Power'.
[100] Bird, 'The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities', 16.

them, calling it a 'demand-side' issue.[101] These three arguments clearly show the power political parties hold in the development of female representation. Ultimately, parties also choose their leader who can then become Prime Minister, thus also gatekeeping this post for women. Besides the need for parties to acknowledge their gatekeeper positions, the second argument can (partly) be resolved by improving maternity leave and childcare which would better the circumstances for women to work and increase representation in various jobs as well as in politics.[102]

These aforementioned arguments provide a good understanding of the arguments highlighted by academics which could prevent female representation from developing. Other scholars have argued wide-ranging conditions that make it favourable for women to enter parliament.[103] These include high female participation levels in the paid workforce, proportional representation electoral rules, high district magnitude and cultural attributes such as postmaterialist values.[104] The Netherlands and Finland both have proportional representation electoral rules and a relatively high female participation in the paid workforce.[105]

1.4 The Dutch case

Female representation – more precisely, why it fails to reflect the scope of diversity of women in Dutch society – has long been an area of interest for researchers. One suggested reason for the lack of diversity is the conflicted social structure in the Netherlands stemming from the pillarisation that ended in the 1960s.[106] The pillarisation in the Netherlands was a structure where everyone was divided into specific groups, so-called pillars. These pillars were based on socio-economic or religious beliefs and provided citizens with short ties to the political elites.[107] There were four pillars: The Catholic pillar, the Protestant Pillar, the Socialist pillar and the less strict Liberal Pillar.[108] In this pillarised system, everyone stayed within their group, which meant that, for example, Catholics only went to Catholic schools, churches and even banks. People only socialised with others within their pillar and subsequently voted for the party in

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[101] Bird, 16.

[102] Hessami and da Fonseca, 'Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies'.

[103] Salmond, 'Proportional Representation and Female Parliamentarians'; Malami and Kenworthy, 'Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis'.

[104] Rosenbluth, Salmond, and Thies, 'Welfare Works'.

[105] Verloo, 'Making Women Count in the Netherlands'; Anttonen, 'The Female Working Citizen: Social Rights, Work and Motherhood in Finland'.

[106] Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.

[107] Lucardie, 'The Netherlands: Populism versus Pillarization'.

[108] Steininger, 'Pillarization (Verzuiling) and Political Parties'; Lucardie, 'The Netherlands: Populism versus Pillarization'.

their pillar.[109] This resulted in a relatively predictable electoral outcome and an easier formation process for the government. Within this pillarisation, religion was very prominently active in politics which strengthened the inequality of women in society.[110] Political parties did not welcome women as representatives, which was amplified by the pillarisation and their gatekeeping position was significant.[111] The end of the Second World War was a turning point for women's representation and eventually for pillarisation as well.[112] In the 1950s women's organisations affiliated with the party elite started to become more active.[113] In the 1960s the pillarised system started to unravel, and people did not vote for the same party every election. Following this unravelling, religion became less important, as did the social norms that had prevailed during the pillarised system. In the culture of pillarisation people did not question the political elite and women did not question their place in society.[114] When people became less religious and started demanding more influence, women also began identifying gender discrimination and this resulted in the second-wave of feminism.[115] Coinciding with this second wave, a so-called 'sexual revolution' started in the Netherlands that put women at the centre and called for more freedom for women.[116]

In the late sixties, a new women's movement began actively campaigning for more women in politics.[117] In the 1970s the percentage of women in the second chamber was 15%. In 2017, the percentage of women in the second chamber had risen to 37%.[118] This shows a significant growth that happened over those decades. Before the 1970s, and arguably to a degree still today, there was a significant difference between the confessional parties and the non-confessional parties in the way they treated women's political participation. Confessional parties struggled with women as representatives and did not encourage women's representation.[119] Therefore, Leijenaar attributes women's low political participation in part to the supremacy of these confessional parties, together with the overall fragmentation of the parties and the absence of dominant left-wing parties.[120] Left-wing parties have currently (counting the parliamentary

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[109] Lucardie, 'The Netherlands: Populism versus Pillarization'.
[110] Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.
[111] Leijenaar; Verloo, *Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality: A Critical Frame Analysis of Gender Policies in Europe*.
[112] Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.
[113] Leijenaar, 107.
[114] Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.
[115] Leijenaar.
[116] Meijer, *Het persoonlijke wordt politiek*, 3.
[117] Lovenduski, *State Feminism and Political Representation*.
[118] Lovenduski; Parlement, 'Vrouwen in de Tweede Kamer'.
[119] Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.
[120] Leijenaar, 118.

elections of 2021) remained smaller opposition parties as opposed to the liberal and nationalistic right-wing parties.[121]

While the Netherlands became less conservative and started liberalising from the 1960s on, the conservative undertones are still present and even expressed in politics today.[122] For example, emancipation policies still take men as a point of reference.[123] The patriarchal and religious structures can also be seen in the rhetoric of nationalist political parties who have called Dutch society and its traditions and culture based on 'Judeo-Christianity'.[124] Van den Hemel argues that conservative nationalists have started using this more over time, fundamentally changing Dutch culture to a more conservative religious one that is less progressive than it was before.[125] This change in culture could influence more than just the way religion is viewed. Verloo asserts that religious groups with anti-gender ideology can be linked to extreme-right populist parties and therefore propagate this ideology further.[126] However, analysing Dutch extreme-right wing parties, Verloo recognises them as outliers within this spectrum. Specifically discussing the PVV, the longest-sitting Dutch extreme-right wing party, Verloo explains that while they do not actively reinforce religious anti-gender ideology, they do not actively support gender equality measures either, instead only using the progressive stance of the Netherlands as 'window-dressing'.[127] Another extreme right-wing populist party in the Netherlands that has spoken negatively about women and their place in society is *Forum voor Democratie* (Forum for Democracy) or FvD. In an essay in 2019, the leader of this party, Thierry Baudet, criticised how women have become more focused on careers and less on domestic jobs, resulting in less time for child-bearing, subsequently blaming women's individuality for the decreasing population growth in the Western world.[128] Even earlier, in 2017, Baudet claimed in a magazine interview that 'generally speaking, women excel less in most jobs and also have less ambition in life'.[129] This shows how due to the rise of right-wing nationalism, coupled with some religious influences, this patriarchal and sexist rhetoric still prevails in the Netherlands and can hinder progress for women not only in politics, but in all aspects of life.

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[121] Trouw, 'Bekijk hier de uitslagen van de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen'.
[122] Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.
[123] Verloo, 'Making Women Count in the Netherlands'.
[124] van den Hemel, '(Pro)Claiming Tradition: The "Judeo-Christian" Roots of Dutch Society and the Rise of Conservative Nationalism'.
[125] van den Hemel, 53.
[126] Verloo, 'Gender Knowledge, and Opposition to the Feminist Project'.
[127] Verloo, 25.
[128] Aa, 'Kritiek Baudet op abortus, euthanasie en werkende vrouwen zorgt voor ophef'.
[129] Quote, 'Quote Bij Thierry Baudet'; my translation.

1.5 The Finnish case

The perception on politics in Finland is highly gendered, because of their strong gender equality measures. Finland is seen as progressive and belongs to a bloc of Nordic countries all battling female oppression.[130] This goes back to their earliest political advancements. In 1906 Finland was the first country in Europe to grant women the right to vote.[131] In the following year, the election resulted in the first nineteen women in parliament in Finland and the world.[132] Subsequently, the progress stagnated somewhat; Besides the appointment of the first two female ministers in 1926 and 1946, not much progress was made for female political representation in Finland until the 1970s.[133] A suggested reason for this stagnation is the male structure that was still embedded in Finnish politics which started to unravel during the second wave of feminism from the 1960s on.[134] As previously stated, this stagnation is a surprising fact considering the progressive image that surrounds Finland. Finnish society was different than the Netherlands in some respects. Even though in both countries, the women's movement gained ground in the 1960s, in Finland, women already started to increase in the workforce in the 1950s.[135]

While currently Finland and the Netherlands have similar socio-economic statuses, Finland's historical background is considerably different. While the Netherlands was divided into a pillarised society with multiple strands of religion battling for the majority, in Finland, historically, the state and (Christian) church had been significantly connected.[136] This started to change during the 19th century when people's movements were founded and mobilised regular citizens.[137] Women's movements also started to gain ground and mobilise women to fight for universal suffrage.[138] After women gained the vote and the first female representatives were elected, the progress slowed down, remaining at 10% representation for several decades.[139]

These developments during the twentieth century need to be placed in the political, cultural, and social frame of the time. Culturally, it was not as new for women to vote as might be assumed. As early as 1865 single and widowed women could vote in rural municipalities,

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[130] Anttonen, 'Vocabularies of Citizenship and Gender'.
[131] Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'.
[132] Turunen.
[133] Turunen; Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'.
[134] Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'.
[135] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'.
[136] Anttonen, 'Vocabularies of Citizenship and Gender'; Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.
[137] Anttonen, 'Vocabularies of Citizenship and Gender'.
[138] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'; Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'.
[139] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'.

followed by towns and cities in 1873.[140] This helps to understand why the political process of granting universal suffrage could have culminated a decade before that of the Netherlands and several other countries. Therefore, from a historical perspective, the relative speed with which the suffrage was granted was to be expected. Moreover, women were already working alongside men in the early nineteenth century and were portrayed in literature as strong.[141] It is not surprising, then, that during the political proceedings to grant women suffrage, it was stated that women had earned the right to vote through their significance to society.[142]

Looking closer at the Finnish political context, the parliamentary system was relatively antiquated, partly because Finland was not fully independent yet at the beginning of the twentieth century.[143] Focusing on the division of female politicians, there are some valuable insights. The Social Democrats had the most significant proportion of women in the election of 1907, with nine female seats.[144] One of these nine would subsequently become the first female minister in 1926.[145]

Taking other studies on Finland into account, the country has been compared - both implicitly and explicitly - to other Nordic countries.[146] Looking at Raaum, she includes Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Finland in her study. Raaum[147] contends that when women cross institutional barriers that were previously impossible to cross, it shows that women are part of a political group, which puts women more prominently forward as a group. Furthermore, in this comparative study, Raaum exemplifies Finland as the first country in the world to implement universal suffrage and showing the uniqueness of having the first female minister in 1926, long before any other country in Europe.[148] However, coinciding with other Nordic countries, Finland did not make more progress in politics before 1970.[149] After decades of around 10% female representation in parliament, this percentage rose to 30% and beyond, eventually leading to women gaining 39% of the seats in 1991.[150] No clear explanation for this development is given in the literature. Closely resembling the approach used in this thesis, Turunen interviews

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[140] Sulkunen, 'Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship in Finland'.
[141] Anttonen, 'The Female Working Citizen: Social Rights, Work and Motherhood in Finland'.
[142] Sulkunen, 'Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship in Finland'.
[143] Sulkunen.
[144] Sulkunen.
[145] Sulkunen.
[146] Anttonen, 'Vocabularies of Citizenship and Gender'; Anttonen, 'The Female Working Citizen: Social Rights, Work and Motherhood in Finland'; Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'.
[147] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'.
[148] Raaum.
[149] Raaum.
[150] Raaum.

two female ministers about the perseverance of masculinity in the political landscape.[151] Turunen argues that women have not gained more ground in politics because of the inherent masculine structure of the political system in Finland. The Prime Minister is the gatekeeper for the cabinet, and in the last century, this post has mostly been filled by men. She argues that the female prime ministers so far have always included more women in their cabinets than the majority of the male prime ministers.[152]

Raaum and Turunen both argue that even though Finland is progressive and has made major strides, men dominate the political landscape.[153] This confirms the earlier argument that patriarchal constructs are still visible in the political landscape. Moreover, women are not seen as fit to lead because leadership is more equated with masculine traits.[154] In addition to this, there are studies that have looked at the backlash so-called 'feminist' politics have gotten in the last decade. Populist parties, like the Finns Party in Finland, have attacked gender equality.[155] They oppose any form of gender equality politics and their mindset is profoundly masculine at the core, also among the female candidates.[156] Thus, Finland, still has patriarchal structures within their political system. It must be noted here that the pieces by Raaum and Turunen were written before the Finnish election of 2019, in which the current female Prime Minister was elected.[157] Therefore, some claims that were made by these authors might not be fully reflective of the current situation (spring of 2021) and further similar research needs to be done.

1.6 Language influence on representation

When discussing female representation, considerable research has analysed the masculinity and masculine traits that are visible within politics in norms, concepts, and posts.[158] This influences the language both politicians and the general public use about politics and representation. How people talk and write about gender relations and women in politics influences how people think about and value it.[159] The pieces about gender relations focus on comparing different genders in politics, while the latter focuses specifically on female politicians. First, there are several

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[151] Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'.
[152] Turunen.
[153] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'; Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'.
[154] Kunovich, Paxton, and Hughes, 'Gender in Politics'.
[155] Kantola and Lombardo, 'Populism and Feminist Politics'.
[156] Kantola and Lombardo.
[157] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'; Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'.
[158] Bourque and Grossholtz, 'Politics an Unnatural Practice: Political Science Looks at Female Participation'; Kantola and Lombardo, 'Populism and Feminist Politics'; Shields, 'Passionate Men, Emotional Women'.
[159] Pryzgoda and Chrisler, 'Definitions of Gender and Sex: The Subtleties of Meaning'.

preconceived notions society generally has about women. Contemporary Western culture tends to exclude women from politics by assuming women are uncomfortable with power.[160] Furthermore, there are different words and terms used to describe women in power as opposed to men, such as 'ambitious' for men and 'pushy' for women.[161] Language influences what we see as feminine, for example, with certain topics within politics. Education has long been seen as a 'female' issue.[162] This stems from women caring for children and educating them, linking 'socio-cultural' issues to women.[163] Lakoff states that "powerful women are variously sexualised, objectified, or ridiculed."[164] These negative connotations with women who run for public office are not uncommon for women in power.

Furthermore, women's physical appearances are more often discussed than their male counterparts.[165] An example is Hillary Clinton when she ran for public office. Clinton ran for the seat of senator representing New York in 2000.[166] Seeing how only a few years prior she had served as the first lady of the US president, which was perceived as a more of a passive job, her run was unprecedented.[167] Clinton's election was not only met with considerable media attention but also with public scrutiny. Gender was a significant topic of discussion during this election.[168] Her ambition was displayed as unfitting for a woman, and the focus of her election was repeatedly on her looks. Moreover, she was sexualised because of her gender. The focus on looks can empower men, while damaging women.[169] For Clinton, her gender defined the apparent limitations of what she should pursue and her diversion from that path – in other words, her ambition - made her unwoman-like.

In line with this, women tend to be the subject of mass criticism when they show qualities such as 'ambition' or 'authority'. This stands in contrast to men, who are actively praised for displaying the same attributes.[170] Mary Talbot agrees with this sentiment.[171] Talbot argues that all genders come with their stereotypes. Stereotypes about women are mostly about their

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[160] Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'.
[161] Lakoff.
[162] Lakoff.
[163] Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'; Hagqvist, Gådin, and Nordenmark, 'Work–Family Conflict and Well-Being Across Europe'.
[164] Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities', 173.
[165] Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'.
[166] Busher, 'Framing Hillary Clinton: A Content Analysis of the New York Times News Coverage of the 2000 New York Senate Election'.
[167] Busher.
[168] Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'.
[169] Lakoff.
[170] Lakoff.
[171] Talbot, 'Gender Stereotypes: Reproduction and Challenge'.

'empty-headedness'.[172] In the political world itself, language and the agendas written in them are still dominated by men and by traditional values.[173] This is exemplified again, in the way in which men and women who have a career are discussed. Men do not have to defend their place in office, while women often do.[174] Thus, because women feel the need to prove themselves more, they tend to be more diligent in their work. This, again, goes against the traditional stereotype – that women are less inclined to work full time and be career oriented - often written about.[175]

These arguments signal to "the acceptance of masculinity as ideal political behaviour"[176] which is still prevalent today.[177] In the general non-academic literature about female empowerment and politics, the difference in language is visible. The language used to describe what women can bring to the table refer to traditional values ascribed to women, instead of gender-neutral or even male terms.[178] Even children learn to use this language from a young age. They understand that gender is a crucial identifying factor and learn the traits associated with them. For example, women being categorised as 'soft' and who are disregarded because of it.[179] The literature signals that if the number of female representatives were to change, language would also change to reflect this increase.[180] Language conveys implications about women in power and reinforces these views in society. The importance of framing in the media is related to this use of language. Through framing, the media can shape the perspectives of the general public. Busher contends that "the public is dependent on the mass media for political information".[181] With this, she indicates the significance of the media for female politicians and the perception of the female political empowerment.[182]

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[172] Talbot.
[173] Wodak, 'Multiple Identities: The Roles of Female Parliamentarians in the EU Parliament'.
[174] Wodak.
[175] Wodak.
[176] Bourque and Grossholtz, 'Politics an Unnatural Practice: Political Science Looks at Female Participation', 228.
[177] Bourque and Grossholtz, 'Politics an Unnatural Practice: Political Science Looks at Female Participation'.
[178] Moller Okin, 'Gender the Public and the Private'.
[179] Mansbridge, 'Feminism and Democracy'.
[180] Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'; Talbot, 'Gender Stereotypes: Reproduction and Challenge'.
[181] Busher, 'Framing Hillary Clinton: A Content Analysis of the New York Times News Coverage of the 2000 New York Senate Election'.
[182] Busher, 10.

2. Conceptual framework

The following conceptual framework will structure the analysis of this thesis. There are three main parts that need to be distinguished. First, the type of representation through which the research will be framed will be discussed. Second, the choice for a top-down perspective will be explained. Finally, key concepts will be defined and placed in their relevant context.

This thesis will be framed by looking at a political representative's standpoint. This means that while other forms of representation, such as women's representation in the workforce, will be referenced, they are not extensively analysed. As explained in the introduction there are three main forms of political representation: symbolic, substantive, and descriptive representation.[183] Here, the focus will be on descriptive representation[184], because it refers to the most direct form of representation and therefore signals clearly the lack of representation for women in politics. This means that a group identifies with a representative because of their similar traits and looks, for example men voting for men.[185] Included will be historical, cultural and political factors that can be of influence on the amount of female representation.

Furthermore, this thesis analyses from a top-down perspective. The focus is on the standpoint of female representatives in the national parliaments. This thesis will only consider the views on society and the media from the perspective of parliamentarians. This frames the analysis in multiple ways; not only from a specific knowledge based female perspective (fuelled by gender identity), but also from a professional perspective as politicians. Where other research has focused on gender implications[186], female participation on the job market[187] or on society's view of gender and representation[188], this thesis will focus on the top-down view of female representatives in the Dutch and Finish parliaments and their views on gender equality and female representation. The methods will be further explained below, however, it is necessary to note here that views from society will mostly be excluded from this study, apart from the fact that the parliamentarians themselves are part of society and their views can be both partly shaped by their own subjective experiences as civilians as well as politicians.

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[183] Celis et al., 'Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation'; Karp and Banducci, 'When Politics Is Not Just a Man's Game'; Coffé, 'Conceptions of Female Political Representation'.
[184] As explained in the introduction, descriptive representation describes the relationship between the characteristic of the represented group and the representative.
[185] Celis et al., 'Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation'.
[186] Pryzgoda and Chrisler, 'Definitions of Gender and Sex: The Subtleties of Meaning'; Paechter, 'Masculine Femininities/Feminine Masculinities'.
[187] Iversen and Rosenbluth, 'Work and Power'.
[188] Knight and Brinton, 'One Egalitarianism or Several?'

Furthermore, the key concepts in this thesis are gender, political representation, and feminine and masculine. These concepts need to be defined to clearly explain the frame of this research. By conceptualising gender, we need to make a clear distinction between gender and sex. Sex describes the biological aspect of a person, while gender refers to 'behavioural, social and psychological characteristics of men and women'.[189] This distinction is vital to create a nuanced study and helps explain the concepts of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, this puts the focus of this thesis on constructed gender identities including masculine and feminine features.[190] This is reflected in the questions posed to female parliamentarians[191] that are focused on both their own and other politicians' behaviours in politics and whether they qualify these behaviours as feminine or masculine. This way the societal confines of being a woman in politics are fully analysed. Masculine refers to traits and behaviours that are typically associated with how men should behave, while feminine refers to typical female behaviour. These terms refer, among others, to the way people dress, act, behave and are perceived.

Connecting this discussion about gender to representation is vital to understanding female representation and the perspectives of the female politicians. The relationship between female representation and gender structures is connected through the terms masculine and feminine. These concepts are at the core of the relationship between gender structures and representation because of the way they have been structured and subsequently have shaped the political system. Masculinity has been equated with dominance which has resulted in it being equated with power.[192] Femininity is not seen as having its own traits, but rather as lacking in masculinity.[193] Relating to what was said before about the influence of language, this influence of gender structures in combination with these power relations inherently influences the way which we perceive our representatives. This falls in line with the argument made by Pryzgoda and Chrislers that "gendered word choices have been shown to influence comprehension, memory, and attitudes toward women."[194] Therefore, it is important to take gender structures into account when discussing female representation and its improvement.

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[189] Pryzgoda and Chrisler, 'Definitions of Gender and Sex: The Subtleties of Meaning', 554.
[190] Krook, 'Studying Political Representation'.
[191] See Appendix A
[192] Paechter, 'Masculine Femininities/Feminine Masculinities'.
[193] Paechter, 256.
[194] Pryzgoda and Chrisler, 'Definitions of Gender and Sex: The Subtleties of Meaning', 556.

3. Methodology

3.1 Case selection

Considering the chosen countries for this thesis, the Netherlands has been used considerably in comparative research on gender.[195] It has been compared mostly to southern or eastern European countries and is generally described as a country that focuses on quantitative representation of women, while rejecting the option of quotas to increase representation.[196] It is also described as a progressive country. However, female representation in the Dutch parliament has never gone above 41% and the media still reports about women in politics differently than men. Lastly, the Netherlands has not yet had a female prime minister.[197]

Studies about Finland are less prominently present in gender and feminism studies than about the Netherlands. Studies that chose Finland as the main focus used frameworks considering patriarchal and masculine influences, populism, women's rights in a non-political sense, and media representation.[198] Furthermore, Finland often gets grouped into the 'Nordic' category together with Sweden and Norway.[199] At the same time, it also is included more in comparative studies about representation and women's rights.[200] This leaves a gap in the research for a more in-depth analysis about Finland itself, especially from a top-down focus. This thesis aims to fill this gap by approaching Finland as its own case.

Interestingly, despite their differences, Finland and the Netherlands get grouped together in comparative studies as well, seeing as they are among the more equal countries within Europe. Considering this, comparing them shows the differences equal countries can have and can uncover underlying causes. These countries are comparable in terms of political systems and current social-economic level of society, while they also implement different strategies for

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[195] Verloo, 'Making Women Count in the Netherlands'; Verloo, *Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality: A Critical Frame Analysis of Gender Policies in Europe*; Latner and McGann, 'Geographical Representation under Proportional Representation'; Oldersma, 'High Tides in a Low Country: Gendering Political Representation in the Netherlands'; Bosch, 'History and Historiography of First-Wave Feminism in the Netherlands, 1860-1922'; Leyenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*; Lucardie, 'The Netherlands: Populism versus Pillarization'.
[196] Verloo, *Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality: A Critical Frame Analysis of Gender Policies in Europe*.
[197] Herderscheê, 'Aandeel vrouwen in de Kamer stijgt naar 39 procent'; de Groot and Molenaar, 'Nog Steeds Zijn Drie Ministersposten Nooit Ingevuld Door Een Vrouw'; Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'.
[198] Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'; Kantola and Lombardo, 'Populism and Feminist Politics'; Anttonen, 'The Female Working Citizen: Social Rights, Work and Motherhood in Finland'; Anttonen, 'Vocabularies of Citizenship and Gender'.
[199] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'; Anttonen, 'The Female Working Citizen: Social Rights, Work and Motherhood in Finland'.
[200] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'; Kantola and Lombardo, 'Populism and Feminist Politics'; Sulkunen, 'Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship in Finland'.

improving women's place in the labour force and in politics.[201] Both countries also experienced the second wave of feminism at the same time, in the 1960s, when calls for more representation started rising.[202] However, the differences are clear as well; Finland has a better ranking on the Global Gender Gap Index 2020 measured by the World Economic Forum, based on 153 countries and fourteen indicators all related to equality. In the Global Gender Gap Index 2020, Finland ranks third while the Netherlands lags behind at place thirty-eight.[203] This is not surprising considering that Finland was earlier in implementing suffrage, has had three female prime ministers – including their current prime minister –, and have a coalition that is led by all women.[204] In comparison, the Netherlands has never had a female prime minister to date, and the last cabinet – the government fell in early 2021 – had no female leaders in it. The last Dutch government consisted of six female ministers out of a total of sixteen ministerial positions.[205] Besides the position of prime minister, two other ministerial positions have also never been filled by women. These ministries are the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.[206]

The Dutch and Finnish parliaments were compared and viewed as separate cases in this thesis. Therefore, this research can be regarded as a multiple case study with two cases, otherwise called an N of 2 (the national parliament of Finland and the national parliament of the Netherlands).[207] Gerring contends that case studies can consist of multiple units of analyses, while still following the case study design.[208] Following this approach, the use of a cross-case study design, including temporal variation, called a comparative-historical method, is adopted in this thesis because it allows these countries to be analysed separately, as is done with the interviews, and allows for analysis over a certain time-period.[209] The temporal variation of this thesis will be twenty years, between 2000-2020. This time frame was chosen because it includes multiple parliamentary elections in both countries and gave the interviewed parliamentarians room to elaborate on the progression in their countries over the last two decades.

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[201] Knight and Brinton, 'One Egalitarianism or Several?'; Holli and Kantola, 'A Politics for Presence: State Feminism, Women's Movements and Political Representation in Finland'.

[202] Lovenduski et al., 'Conclusions'.

[203] World Economic Forum, 'Global Gender Gap Report 2020'.

[204] Graham-Harrison, 'Feminism Comes of Age in Finland as Female Coalition Takes the Reins'; Holli and Kantola, 'A Politics for Presence: State Feminism, Women's Movements and Political Representation in Finland'.

[205] 'Vrouwelijke bewindslieden'.

[206] de Groot and Molenaar, 'Nog Steeds Zijn Drie Ministersposten Nooit Ingevuld Door Een Vrouw'.

[207] Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*.

[208] Gerring.

[209] Gerring.

3.2 Interview design

As mentioned previously, language is important when looking at the discourse of a story.[210] Language is an important aspect of the dynamic world of politics, especially for women. Yule and Brown use in-depth analysis to look at language and focus on the way information is conveyed and what emotion lies behind it.[211] However, although language is important and interesting for examining female representation, this thesis does not analyse language use as in-depth as Yule and Brown do. Instead, specific language use by female parliamentarians during the interviews is analysed and masculinity and femininity are discussed as well.

This thesis listens to the personal views and lived experiences of the Dutch and Finish female parliamentarians and compares them to existing research. Elite interviews with female politicians were conducted to hear the top-down perspective on female representation in both countries and to look at the causes of the slow development of female representation from an in-person perspective. This design is useful as it shows not only the passive research of each country but also liven the comparison in using active sources. It gives these case studies a unique perspective that has rarely been included in previous research on Finish and Dutch female representation in national parliaments.

Clarifying the research design, the use of elite interviews needs to be further explained. There are different types of interview designs within qualitative research that can have valuable results. Elite interviewing refers to the subject of the interview. Within the literature there are a variety of definitions of who in society are 'elite', however it is generally agreed that the subjects are high-ranking members of society with some form of power and considerable knowledge.[212] This thesis categorises parliamentarians as an elite group within society, specifically focusing on female parliamentarians. Ordinary language interviews resemble the structure that elite interviews set out. With ordinary language interviewing, the interviewer regards the subjects as knowing the topic and expects no particular answer.[213] This encourages a natural conversation structure. Closely related to this are semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are flexible, conversational interviews with planned out questions that allow for additional unscripted questions.[214] The questions posed aim to understand the opinion of the parliamentarians and consider their views on female representation in their respective

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[210] Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*.
[211] Brown and Yule, *Discourse Analysis*.
[212] Harvey, 'Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews'.
[213] Schaffer, 'Ordinary Language Interviewing'.
[214] Jennings, 'Interviewing: A Focus on Qualitative Techniques'.

country. This type of structure contributes to more detailed answers and more room for the interviewee to talk.[215] This thesis has conducted elite interviews that are semi-structured and resemble ordinary language interviewing.

3.3 Selection of parliamentarians

Female parliamentarians from both countries were grouped into two categories: coalition and opposition. This was done to ensure a broad representation of the parliament. For each country a primary and a secondary list was made containing fifteen primary and fifteen secondary parliamentarians from the coalition and the opposition. The names on these lists were picked at random for interviewing. After a relatively low response from both countries, the secondary list was used to gather more participants. The response rate with Dutch parliamentarians was higher than with the Finnish ones. In total nine Dutch parliamentarians and three Finnish parliamentarians agreed and participated in an interview conducted via an online platform. One Dutch parliamentarian only agreed to a written interview, which has been included in this research but differs significantly from the rest.

Dutch politicians' relatively high response rate can be due to several reasons; Dutch politicians have a language in common with the interviewer, recognise a mutual cultural background, and feel a connection because they can recognise parts of themselves. Moreover, the Dutch politicians might feel a certain level of accountability towards a Dutch constituent and feel more inclined to answer their questions. Lastly, the Dutch university, Leiden University, which is connected with this thesis, is one of the biggest universities in the Netherlands, and many prominent politicians have studied there. In contrast, the Finnish parliamentarians do not have these commonalities with the interviewer. Besides this, their schedules have been busier because the 2021 municipal election is coming up, problematising getting access. In addition to this, another explanation may be that they get a high number of interview requests per day and feel less of a connection with an international student. This lack of connection could also be due to their comfortability speaking English and their lack of knowledge about the Netherlands. All of this has contributed to the discrepancy in response from Dutch and Finnish parliamentarians.

3.4 Method for analysis

All participants that were interviewed in person gave oral consent and confirmation for their participation in this research and gave permission to be recorded to avoid information loss. The

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[215] Jennings.

interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes each and all respondents were subjected to the same list of questions, however, due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, the follow up questions differed per interview.[216]

To analyse the conducted interviews, each interview has been subscribed, subsequently coded and those codes have been analysed to answer the research question. Following Schmidt, this thesis analyses the interviews using one code per individual relevant passage.[217] This prevents overlap and provides the reader with a clear overview of the passage in comparison with other passages from other interviews.[218] The following codes were chosen as analytical tools: gendered expectations, female representation, difference between the Netherlands and Finland, solutions, causes, and development over time. All codes are discussed one by one and subsequently compared in the discussion. This provides the starting point of analysing the outcome of the interviews.

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[216] The interview questions can be found in appendix A.
[217] Schmidt, 'The Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews', 256.
[218] Schmidt, 'The Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews'.

4. Findings

All the Dutch and Finnish female parliamentarians that were interviewed as part of this thesis were part of Parliament of their respective countries between January and March of 2021, which is the time frame in which the interviews were taken. Parliamentarians from the following Dutch parties were interviewed: Socialist Party (SP), the liberal-centrist party (D66), Green Party (GL)[219], Christian Democrats (CDA), the Liberal Party (VVD), the Labour Party (PvdA), Christian Democrats (CU)[220], and the Animal Party (PvdD). Parliamentarians from the following Finnish parties were interviewed: the Swedish People's party (RKP), the Centre Party (SK), and National Coalition Party (Kok). The interview questions can be found in Appendix A, and the names of the parliamentarians and the ideological affiliation of the parties are further disclosed in Appendix B.

To examine these interviews thoroughly, these findings are structured per code to discern between vital subjects and give a clear overview of the overall sentiment of the politicians. After summarising the outcome of each code and reflecting on how many times it was coded[221], an overarching result is discussed for both the Dutch interviews and the Finnish interviews (a short coding scheme can be found in Appendix C). These results show the generalised outcome of the interviewees per country. The Dutch and Finnish analyses per code are then compared to each other. Next, all the outcomes are summarised and compared to the existing literature in the discussion. Finally, after analysing all the interviews and codes, an answer to the research question is formulated in the conclusion.

4.1 Female representation

Female representation was coded to signal how female parliamentarians felt about the level of representation in parliament, the division of genders and minorities, and what they feel would be enough female representation to reach a fair division. The interviewees talked about the representation of women in the current parliament (before the Dutch elections of 2021), the situation within their own parties and about intersectionality within representation. This code was tallied seventy-eight times with the Dutch interviewees and twenty-four times with the

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[219] Two politicians were interviewed from this party, a footnote with their names will be used to distinguish between them.
[220] The difference between CDA and CU will be explained in Appendix A.
[221] The codes are: gendered expectations, female representation, difference between the Netherlands and Finland, solutions, causes, and development over time. The coding scheme and the amount each code was coded can be found in appendix B.

Finnish interviewees. For both groups this is the second highest code, this falls in line with the focus of the interviews and the significance the interviewees placed on it.

4.1.1 Dutch Parliamentarians

Dutch parliamentarians were almost unanimously in agreement about the state of female representation in parliament: it is not enough. The exception being the politician from the VVD[222], the liberal party that has been the biggest party within parliament for the past ten years. She feels that it is going well and that female representation has improved over time. The other parliamentarians all felt female representation in parliament could be improved. However, their statements ranged from criticising the current representation and calling it 'bad' to milder statements that merely called for improvements. Therefore, it can be stated that most of the Dutch parliamentarians see room for improvement in the current state of female representation. Moreover, the parliamentarians discussed various explanations and solutions. These are discussed below with the codes 'causes' and 'solutions'.

Several parliamentarians mentioned descriptive representation as a necessary form for female representation to increase. Parliamentarians from D66[223], VVD[224], CU[225], and PvdA[226] agree that more female representation is needed and mention as a reason for this, that girls and women should be able to identify themselves with their representatives. According to them, this would improve and help grow representation significantly. While the answer from one politician from GL[227] was not conclusive enough to account for the same argument, all other politicians argued that increasing female representation is crucial. Moreover, looking at descriptive representation in relation to other minoritised groups, only two of the nine parliamentarians[228] mentioned the significance of improving the representation of ethnic minorities.

Finally, the interviewees were asked when enough female representation was achieved. Three out of the nine interviewees[229] argued that female representation was sufficient if the House of Representatives was equally divided: fifty percent men and fifty percent women. The VVD[230] was the only one who explicitly argued against aiming for fifty percent: "*That's the question:*

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[222] Bente Becker, February 2021
[223] Salima Belhaj, February 2021
[224] Bente Becker, February 2021
[225] Carla Dik-Faber, January 2021
[226] Kirsten van den Hul, January 2021
[227] Lisa Westerveld, January 2021
[228] Kirsten van den Hul (Pvda, January 2021) and Sandra Beckerman (SP, January 2021)
[229] Eva van Esch (PvdD, February 2021), Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet (CDA, January 2021), and Laura Bromet (GL, January 2021)
[230] Bente Becker, February 2021

when do you think it's enough? My goal is not that half or more than half must necessarily be women. But my goal must be for women to think 'I want to be a part of the decision.' And women who like and can do that, that they don't feel in any way hindered to think that they could do it. That everyone who would want to, gets the chance to go for it".[231] This feeling was echoed by the politicians from GL[232], PvdA[233], and CU[234] who said that we have reached significant representation when people identify themselves with their representatives and it is not an issue of which gender that representative is. The politician from the VVD[235] and the politician from D66[236] did not replicate the same arguments. Instead, both politicians described different strategies that can be used to improve female representation further.

4.1.2 Finnish parliamentarians

The Finnish parliamentarians showed a somewhat unanimous front. When discussing the current state of female representation in their parliament, all three[237] state that there are more women in parliament than ever before and they feel this is a good development. Moreover, the women agree that there are more women in Ministerial and leadership positions than ever before. However, they all think there is room for improvement, especially within other governmental layers. Therefore, they contend that increasing female representation would better their system. This increasing representation will help with more improvements for women in society. One politician argues this by saying "*I think that this representation has brought forward a stronger pressure to start really systematically working on advancing gender equality. I think now we are in a good position*".[238] She was the only one to argue this in an explicit way. Given that these parliamentarians' parties all fall within the centre of the left-right political spectrum,[239] it is not surprising that their moderate standpoints align with each other.

The politicians[240] all mention descriptive representation in some way, mostly noting that role models are necessary to increase representation, while also having a positive influence on society. However, apart from the politician of the RKP[241], arguments about intersectionality in

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[231] Bente Becker, February 2021
[232] Lisa Westerveld, January 2021
[233] Kirsten van den Hul, January 2021
[234] Carla Dik-Faber, January 2021
[235] Bente Becker, February 2021
[236] Salima Belhaj, February 2021
[237] Eva Biaudet, January 2021, Eeva Kalli, February 2021, and Sari Multala, March 2021
[238] Eva Biaudet, January 2021
[239] See Appendix A
[240] Eva Biaudet (January 2021), Eeva Kalli (February 2021), Sari Multala (March 2021)
[241] Eva Biaudet, January 2021

regards to ethnicity are not present in the interviews. The RKP parliamentarian states that intersectionality has a big influence on politics and that this should have more of a focus as well. A reason for this is that the representation of minorities and minoritized groups in Finland is not considerably high.

When asked about when there would be enough representation all three gave different answers, however, they are rooted in the same base. The parliamentarian from the SK[242] stated that female representation at the local level should be improved for there to be enough representation. The politician from the KoK[243] talked about a solution in attitudes instead of a decisive number, arguing that more women would go into politics if the attitude of society would change. Finally, the parliamentarian from the RKP[244] gave the most enclosed answer. She argued that it would be enough when there is a longer period of time where women have the majority. 60-40% should be in favour of women in parliament and that would improve female representation immensely. In essence, all three politicians discuss methods for increasing the number of women in politics.

4.1.3 Comparison

Comparing these two outcomes there are less differences than might have been expected based on the different statuses of female representation in the respective national parliaments. The biggest difference is the way in which politicians view the current status of female representation in their respective parliaments. While the Dutch parliamentarians mostly describe the current state as disappointing and not good enough yet, the Finnish parliamentarians are more pleased and emphasise the unprecedented number of female representatives currently in their House of Representatives. However, both groups see room for improvements in their countries.

Another difference is visible in their answers on when enough representation has been reached. In the Netherlands the focus was on either an equal amount of representation in Parliament or an amount significant enough to mobilise other women to step into politics. At the same time, the Finnish representatives were not consentient. In contrast to their Dutch counterparts, no specific amount was mentioned by the majority of the Finnish parliamentarians. Only the

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[242] Eeva Kalli, February 2021
[243] Sari Multala, March 2021
[244] Eva Biaudet, January 2021

parliamentarian from the RKP[245] stated that the scale should be tipped in women's favour for a change.

Looking at the similarities in both countries their answers, the one thing that stands out is the lack of focus on intersectionality.[246] Only a few parliamentarians mentioned intersectionality and argued that all minorities within parliament should be better represented than they are right now. A reason for this could be the focus of the questions and the amount, or lack of, diversity among the interviewees.

4.2 Gendered expectations

The next code is gendered expectations. This code encompasses both implicit and explicit gendered expectations that the interviewees outlined. This encompasses expectations and preconceived notions about women that the interviewees have noticed in language, from the media, society, as well as within parliament in regards to clothing and expected behaviours. These behaviours also brush against what parliamentarians feel women should do to fight against these expectations. Within the Dutch interviews this code was coded 105 times, more than any other code. The same can be seen with the Finnish interviews: it was coded thirty-four times, the highest of them all. This signals the significance of gender and the expectations that surround it for these parliamentarians within politics.

4.2.1 Dutch Parliamentarians

Starting with the Dutch parliamentarians, they noticed gendered expectations in several things. Towards women specifically, the parliamentarians noticed expectations within the way they dressed, acted, and how they were approached by colleagues, the media and their social sphere. Five politicians[247] confirmed that there was a certain expected behavioural pattern within parliament. Two of the same parliamentarians, coupled with three others,[248] subsequently found this expected behaviour to perpetrate a masculine standard. Starting with their appearances, three parliamentarians[249] noticed how women are scrutinised for the way they dress or how the focus often lies on their appearances instead of the topics at hand. This is different for their male counterparts. One politician explained it as follows:

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[245] Eva Biaudet, January 2021
[246] Intersectionality regarding race and gender.
[247] Salima Belhaj (February 2021), Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet (January 2021), Laura Bromet (January 2021), Sandra Beckerman (January 2021), and Kirsten van den Hul (January 2021)
[248] Sandra Beckerman (SP, January 2021), Laura Bromet (GL, January 2021), Lisa Westerveld (GL, January 2021), Carla Dik-Faber (CU, January 2021) and Eva van Esch (PvdD, February 2021)
[249] Kirsten van den Hul (PvdA), Laura Bromet (GL), and Sandra Beckerman (SP), all interviewed in January 2021

"You notice that especially when you are on TV as a female politician. There you are often judged on different criteria than when you are on the screen as a male politician. It's about looks, about clothes, about your haircut, that sort of thing. Men will not easily be judged on that. Women are. Other labels are also plastered on. For example, when I am in a fierce debate, I am easily called 'hysterical', while if a man does that then he is passionate. That is something that you do not only see in politics, but that is more broadly rooted in society and has a lot to do with stereotypes."[250]

This was reiterated by the politicians from the GL[251] and SP[252]. However, this does not mean that most of the Dutch parliamentarians feel as though their appearance is scrutinised more than their male counterparts, at least not explicitly. Instead, several parliamentarians linked the gendered expectations towards women mostly in regards to approach and behaviour. This falls in line with what the politician from PvdA already touched upon. Eight of the nine Dutch parliamentarians[253] said that they saw a difference in behaviours between genders and noted specifically how masculine and feminine behaviours are looked at differently. Only the PvdA parliamentarian[254] did not explicitly use the terms feminine and masculine to describe the behaviour of herself or her colleagues. Most politicians[255] used the terms masculine and feminine to describe qualities of behaviour and used them to either outline the differences between gender, or in some parliamentarians' cases, sex.[256] This is vital to take into account when talking about broad gendered expectations and biases because it portrays a binary division of gender that is present with some parliamentarians which differs from the definition of gender in this thesis. The use of feminine behaviour was mostly said to have a negative connotation and that qualities that are 'masculine' when seen in men are praised while they are scrutinised when presented in women. This argument was presented either explicitly or implicitly in all interviews. Finally, all parliamentarians[257] agreed that they encountered gender bias from

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[250] Kirsten van den Hul, PvdA, January 2021
[251] Laura Bromet, January 2021
[252] Sandra Beckerman, January 2021
[253] Sandra Beckerman (SP, January 2021), Salima Belhaj (D66, February 2021), Laura Bromet (GL, January 2021), Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet (CDA, January 2021), Lisa Westerveld (GL, January 2021), Bente Becker (VVD, February 2021), Carla Dik-Faber (CU January 2021), and Evan van Esch (PvdD, February 2021)
[254] Kirsten van den Hul, January 2021
[255] Excluding Kirsten van den Hul, PvdA
[256] This binary gender distinction was mostly used by Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet (CDA), while others sometimes used sex and gender interchangeably.
[257] Sandra Beckerman (January 2021), Salima Belhaj (February 2021), Laura Bromet (January 2021), Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet (January 2021), Lisa Westerveld (January 2021), Bente Becker (February 2021), Kirsten van den Hul (January 2021), Carla Dik-Faber (January 2021), and Eva van Esch (February 2021)

perpetuating female stereotypes. Three parliamentarians, from the parties CDA[258], GL[259], and CU[260] did not explicitly state that they encountered stereotypes or even denied it at first, but subsequently gave examples of times that women were treated differently than men solely based on their gender.

4.2.2 Finnish Parliamentarians

The Finnish parliamentarians discussed appearance less than Dutch parliamentarians, the parliamentarian from the SK[261] being the only Finnish parliamentarian to not mention it at all. Instead, the focus was more on stereotypes and behaviour. All three parliamentarians[262] agree that there is a certain accepted form of behaviour reinforcing gender biases within parliament. Unlike her colleagues, the parliamentarian of the KoK[263] did not feel this behavioural standard could be categorised as masculine within parliament. However, she indicated that male parliamentarians still have a culture of unofficial 'sauna' meetings where decisions are made without women present. One politician characterised this standard as follows: "*[Society's] attacks are not about my views but about 'don't you know how to behave? You're a woman you shouldn't be so loud. Women shouldn't be so loud. Nobody has taught you how'. [The bias] is still there. It's not so much in the open.*"[264] Therefore, an expectation towards women with regards to behaviour is confirmed by all three. Moreover, the parliamentarians from the RKP[265] and the SK[266] both argued that there is a difference in behaviour between the sexes, the latter politician being the only one to differentiate them as masculine and feminine, going so far as to say that feminine qualities are most important for any politician to have.

Lastly, stereotypes are present in the media, society and even within politics. These stereotypes can be seen according to the parliamentarians from the RKP[267] and the SK[268]. All three encounter stereotypes because of their gender and see that women are treated differently while pursuing the same jobs and acting the same way as men.

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[258] Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet, January 2021
[259] Laura Bromet, January 2021
[260] Carla Dik-Faber, January 2021
[261] Eeva Kalli, February 2021
[262] Eva Biaudet (January 2021), Eeva Kalli (February 2021), Sari Multala (March 2021)
[263] Sari Multala, March 2021
[264] Eva Biaudet, January 2021
[265] Eva Biaudet, January 2021
[266] Eeva Kalli, February 2021
[267] Eva Biaudet, January 2021
[268] Eeva Kali, February 2021

4.2.3 Comparison

Comparing Finland to the Netherlands shows that, according to the parliamentarians, the differences in gendered expectations are minor. While less focus lies on appearance in Finland, the expectations towards female parliamentarians in society and the media are the same. Within both countries female parliamentarians feel as though certain behaviours within politics are expected, and while this is not surprising, these behaviours perpetuate a masculine standard that disadvantages women. Furthermore, several parliamentarians noticed how feminine qualities are valued less than masculine qualities as a politician. This signals that within both countries female parliamentarians notice a bias towards them based on their gender and, sometimes implicitly, describe the word 'political' as masculine.

4.3 Causes

All female parliamentarians were asked what they thought lies at the root of the problem of increasing female representation. They were asked what they believed are the causes of the relatively low female representation in their countries and what the obstacles are to improve this representation. Their answers include causes rooted in culture, the political world, women themselves and social media. Causes were coded a total of seventy-nine times: sixty-two times of these were in the interviews with the Dutch parliamentarians and seventeen were coded with the Finnish parliamentarians. This is a significant amount that shows the variety of reasons the parliamentarians named.

4.3.1 Dutch parliamentarians

The majority of the Dutch politicians[269] raised issues with the political culture in the Netherlands and explained that women are treated more harshly than men. They are scrutinised because of their gender and have to work harder to prove themselves. Connected to this, all politicians mention the presence of gatekeepers in different forms in politics. The first main gatekeeper is the masculine culture in which men still choose men over women. The other main gatekeeper is the political parties; several parties within parliament do not view the issue of female representation as important, which problematises the improvement of it. The politician of the SP summarises this as follows: "*As I said, of course you sometimes suffer from [gender*

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[269] Sandra Beckerman (SP, January 2021), Salima Belhaj (D66, February 2021), Laura Bromet (GL, January 2021), Lisa Westerveld (GL, January 2021), Carla Dik-Faber (CU, January 2021), and Eva van Esch (PvdD, February 2021).

stereotypes] and it is very much a male stronghold, it is very much like an 'old boys network', but also how we do things and, for example, the traditions, that definitely plays a role."[270]

The aforementioned reasons are rooted in a patriarchal tradition within society, which manifests in the 'old boys club', policies focused on men and preconceived notions about women in politics. This continues with another leading cause that parliamentarians from the PvdD[271], PvdA[272], GL[273], CDA[274], and SP pointed out. They argue that childcare (and maternity leave) within parliament (and the general workplace) is still poorly organised. Women have a double burden of combining paid and unpaid work. These arguments underline various social structures present in society that negatively impact women. The social structures tie in again with two other main arguments given by the politicians; that of women confidently stepping forward and 'the problem' of working part-time. The former argues that in general women are less confident than men and, consequently, pursue politics or ambitious roles less. Parliamentarians from D66[275], GL[276], CU[277], and PvdD[278] all argue that, for the most part, men are more pro-active and confident in their skill set and what they want to achieve, in contrast to women who doubt their choice, skills and their ability to deal with the difficulty of the job itself. Lastly, it was raised by parliamentarians from the VVD[279] and CDA[280] that the disproportional representation of women doing part-time work in the Netherlands could have an influence. They stated that because of women's domestic work and the choice for more free time, women opt for part-time work, while men do not. According to them, this prevents women from attaining high-ranking positions within society and specifically in politics.

4.3.2 Finnish Parliamentarians

The Finnish parliamentarians named multiple causes that prevent female representation from expanding. The amount of hate speech and the way women get treated in politics by the media and on social media by the public, was named unanimously by all the politicians. Social media has worsened attacks against female parliamentarians. This is problem is further illustrated as follows: "*Another thing is hatred speech for politicians. I think a lot of women might be afraid*

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[270] Sandra Beckerman, January 2021
[271] Eva van Esch, February 2021
[272] Kirsten van den Hul, January 2021
[273] Lisa Westerveld, January 2021
[274] Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet, January 2021
[275] Salima Belhaj, February 2021
[276] Laura Bromet, January 2021
[277] Carla Dik-Faber, January 2021
[278] Eva van Esch, February 2021
[279] Bente Becker, February 2021
[280] Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet, January 2021

of it. I don't blame them, it's not something you should have to deal with at all in any profession.".[281] Furthermore, the parliamentarian from the RKP[282] argues that not just in Finland but in many countries, right-wing, religious groups have started using 'anti-gender' equality rhetoric which has fuelled this.[283] Another main cause according to the parliamentarians from the KoK[284] and RKP is the division of unpaid care work and childcare that is more disadvantaging than it should be. Women take on most of the house tasks which is harder to combine with a job, especially in politics. This unpaid, domestic work is also valued less than their paid jobs, according to these politicians.

Besides these, the parliamentarians from KoK[285] and RKP[286] each argued different causes. The former politician argued that women expect more of themselves than men and are their own biggest obstacle. At the same time, the parliamentarian from the RKP argued that another cause is that female representation is not high on the political agenda right now, because it is supposedly 'finished' in Finland, which she disagrees with.

4.3.3 Comparison

Looking at the answers the politicians gave, the similarities are not difficult to identify. The way women are treated in politics compared to men and the way this can discourage women from participating in politics, is evident in both countries. Moreover, both countries seem to have held onto the patriarchal structures of the past, as can be seen in the traditional division of unpaid care work that is noticed by the parliamentarians. The improvement of childcare for parents lies, therefore, at the root of the problem. In addition to these, the parliamentarian of the KoK[287] aligns with politicians from D66[288], GL[289], CU[290], and PvdD[291] in arguing that women are their own biggest obstacles because of their lack of confidence in pursuing politics.

Aside from these overlapping arguments, none of the Finnish parliamentarians mention gatekeepers in any form as opposed to the Dutch parliamentarians. Furthermore, part-time work

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[281] Sari Multala (KoK), March 2021
[282] Eva Biaudet, January 2021
[283] In Finland this can be seen with the political party 'True Finns' (PS), see Askola, 'Wind from the North, Don't Go Forth?' for more about PS. For more about other groups in Europe see: Paternotte and Kuhar, 'Disentangling and Locating the "Global Right"'.
[284] Sari Multala, March 2021
[285] Sari Multala, March 2021
[286] Eva Biaudet, January 2021
[287] Sari Multala, March 2021
[288] Salima Belhaj, January 2021
[289] Laura Bromet, January 2021
[290] Carla Dik-Faber, January 2021
[291] Eva van Esch, February 2021

does not seem a prevalent issue with regards to female representation in Finland either. This shows a clear distinction between the two countries.

4.4 Solutions

This code is closely related to the previous one discussed, because most politicians linked causes and solutions together. To make a clear distinction with the previous code, attention was paid to whether parliamentarians discussed situations that obstruct (causes) or help (solutions) women in politics and whether they viewed this positively. Moreover, these solutions also showed what the politicians felt was possible to achieve within their countries' systems. The parliamentarians talked about what the government does or should do to solve the abovementioned causes, what political parties can or should do and what in general would help improve female representation or at least take away some obstacles. Interestingly enough, like causes, solutions were coded sixty-two times with the Dutch parliamentarians. It did differ from causes with the Finnish parliamentarians, encountering it eleven times.

4.4.1 Dutch parliamentarians

The most prominent solution, discussed by the greater number of parliamentarians,[292] concerns political parties. Continuing on the argument that political parties serve as gatekeepers, a significant part of the politicians argue that political parties should actively search for women and put female representation higher on their agenda: "*What helps a lot is that a political party also intends to simply demand that representativeness, that is, 50% men and 50% women.*".[293] Because of the representative system the Netherlands has, the more women that are put on the list or are chosen as leaders of the party, the more representation this will generate.

Another prominent solution discussed by parliamentarians from SP[294], D66[295], GL[296], VVD[297], and PvdA[298], entails women being actively encouraged and coached to join politics. This can be done through female networks within parties, through advocating in society and through coaching trajectories with individual politicians. The parliamentarian from D66 describes how she herself has actively coached women and noticed that women need that extra push, even

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[292] Sandra Beckerman (SP, January 2021), Salima Belhaj (D66, February 2021), Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet (CDA, January 2021), Laura Bromet (GL, January 2021), Kirsten van den Hul (PvdA, January 2021), and Carla Dik-Faber (CU, January 2021)
[293] Laura Bromet, January 2021
[294] Sandra Beckerman, January 2021
[295] Salima Belhaj, February 2021
[296] Laura Bromet, January 2021
[297] Bente Becker, February 2021
[298] Kirsten van den Hul, January 2021

advocating to create a 'new girls old network' to counter the already existing 'old boys network'.[299]

This argument correlates with the claim about women needing to put themselves forward more. With the code causes, it was discussed that women are less confident than men and that this is a problem. The politician from CDA[300] mentions this once again and calls for women to actively step forward and claim their place in politics. The need for more prominent female role models, noted by parliamentarians from the VVD[301], CU[302] and SP[303], also reflects the causes mentioned earlier. Finally, improving organised childcare and maternity leave would also make politics more accessible for women. This argument, coupled with the need for a more equal situation in combining work and unpaid care work, was argued by politicians from the PvdD[304], CU, PvdA[305], VVD, and CDA.

4.4.2 Finnish parliamentarians

Accessibility to combine family life and work, is a solution considered by all the interviewees.[306] They argue that more flexibility within working life in parliament has not yet reached its full potential. In addition to this, the parliamentarians argue that family leave for both parents would alleviate the pressure put on women even more and would give them more space to do their job. Furthermore, a solution that was only mentioned by the parliamentarian from the RKP[307], is that leadership needs to be seen differently in Finland: women do not need to adhere to stereotypical 'male' leadership but instead female leadership should be embraced. More women in leadership positions would realise this. She also argues that stereotypes about gender should be actively fought starting from an early age in education.

4.4.3 Comparison

Both Finnish and (some) Dutch parliamentarians argue that improved parental leave and creating a better situation to combine paid work and unpaid care work would benefit female representation in politics. However, this is where the similarities stop. Where Dutch politicians discussed political parties as vital to increasing female representation through their gatekeeper

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[299] Salima Belhaj, February 2021
[300] Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet, January 2021
[301] Bente Becker, February 2021
[302] Carla Dik-Faber, January 2021
[303] Sandra Beckerman, January 2021
[304] Eva van Esch, February 2021
[305] Kirsten van den Hul, January 2021
[306] Eva Biaudet (January 2021), Eeva Kalli (February 2021), Sari Multala (March 2021
[307] Eva Biaudet, January 2021

role, Finnish parliamentarians do not mention them at all. It seems as though the Finnish parliamentarians see the parties as having a different role or, perhaps, a different attitude in Finland. Dutch politicians place a significant emphasis on women's networks and actively encouraging women to join politics, whereas in Finland the politicians focused on conditions in society and how women behave. They did not feel as though political parties played a significant part in the process. Dutch parliamentarians state that female politicians should reach out and push adequate female candidates forward to increase female representation. This was not mentioned by the Finnish parliamentarians. Perhaps, this is because women have found their way to the political arena in Finland already. Finally, the need for more role models was highlighted by a several Dutch politicians, but not mentioned in Finland nor was the need for women to be more active in joining politics. This signals that descriptive representation seems to be less important to the majority of the Finnish parliamentarians. The solutions given demonstrate a discrepancy in the way female representation can be improved in these countries and allude to the different situations in Dutch and Finish politics and society at large.

4.5 Development over time

Since the time frame in this thesis was framed between 2000 to 2020, it is imperative to ask the interviewees about female representation over time and what they specifically deemed the biggest improvement within this time frame. Besides the developments within their parliament, the politicians also discussed improvements in other governmental layers and within the labour market, with some also pointing out specific examples of female leaders. Within the interviews this was coded nineteen times with the Dutch interviewees and eighteen times with the Finnish interviewees. This number is relatively low for the first group, showing their limited answers about the development within the Netherlands. However, the Finnish parliamentarians spoke about this development a significant amount, which could indicate that Finnish parliamentarians feel there has been more development or want to explain the lack of development.

4.5.1 Dutch parliamentarians

Interestingly, half of the interviewees[308] noted that the progress in female representation has stagnated or even reversed over the last twenty years. They feel as though the progress is developing too slowly and more should be done to make it evolve. However, the

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[308] Sandra Beckerman (SP, January 2021), Salima Belhaj (D66, February 2021), Laura Bromet (GL, January 2021), and Kirsten van den Hul (PvdA, January 2021)

parliamentarians from D66[309], GL[310], VVD[311] and PvdA[312] all argue that there are more female political role models than twenty years ago. The politician from the GL[313] illustrates this by pointing to the first female mayor of Amsterdam. Due to this, the image of what a woman can achieve has changed. Together with this changing image and the increasing amount of female role models, the politician from the VVD discusses that expected behavioural patterns and gender biases for women have also changed:

"We just see women in all top positions and nobody thinks it's crazy. People look at what those women can do. I think that is a difference with twenty years ago where people might have said 'there is also a woman!' and that woman was, in a manner of speaking, put in charge of themes such as education and youth care, because that was a nice feminine theme. I am exaggerating a little. But I do think we have come a long way from that image to 'no, those women can just do everything. Doesn't even matter if they're women, they just do it.' They don't talk about it all day; they don't play their role as 'women' all day long. They are no longer an 'excuse Truus' [expression for a wild-card] or 'we also have a woman'. But they just sit at the head of the table. We cannot make it without those women. I am proud of that image."[314]

4.5.2 Finnish parliamentarians

The last election (in 2019) and subsequently the instatement of the current government is seen as the biggest improvement over the last two decades by the parliamentarians from the RKP[315] and the SK[316]. This election delivered more women to the parliament than ever before. However, the politician from the SK is not optimistic about the speed in which female representation is growing: *"I think the progress is slow. However, currently we have five female leaders and are run by a female prime minster. So, it is better than ever before. I think this a big improvement. Especially in the last election we have now chosen more female parliamentarians which is a good step forward."*.[317] Moreover, politicians from the RKP and the SK both mention the presence of a female leader in general as a big improvement. The former parliamentarian discussed the importance of the female president who fulfilled her role for twelve years, while the latter focused on the three female prime ministers Finland has had

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[309] Salima Belhaj, February 2021
[310] Lisa Westerveld, January 2021
[311] Bente Becker, February 2021
[312] Kirsten van den Hul, January 2021
[313] Lisa Westerveld, January 2021
[314] Bente Becker, February 2021
[315] Eva Biaudet, January 2021
[316] Eeva Kalli, February 2021
[317] Eeva Kalli, February 2021

since the 2000s and the introduction of a female speaker of the House. All these women can serve as female role models and pave the way for other women.

While the politician of the KoK[318] does not mention this election nor female leaders, she does focus on a related issue: attitude. She argues that half a century and even twenty years ago women were still casted in certain traditional roles, but now the image has changed. Attitudes about what women can become and whether they are free to work have evolved for the better according to her.

4.5.3 Comparison

Comparing the outcomes of this code shows an equal number of differences and similarities. First focusing on the similarities, it is clear that the growth of female representation is not deemed fast enough by a considerable part of the politicians. In the Netherlands it even decreased between 2012 and 2017. Furthermore, female role models were discussed by parliamentarians within both the Netherlands and Finland showing changing imagery over time. This change in the image of women and the subsequent change in attitude is noted by several parliamentarians of both countries as well.

Looking at the differences, the changing of behaviours and gender biases are only discussed by one Dutch parliamentarian and zero Finnish parliamentarians. As explained above, Finnish parliamentarians mentioned a different kind of gender bias than their Dutch counterparts, which could explain this difference. Furthermore, in contrast to two of their Dutch colleagues, a change in labour productivity was not mentioned by the Finnish politicians. Showing another relevant discrepancy in their societies.

4.6 Difference NL-Finland:

Besides analysing the female parliamentarians' answers for differences and similarities to come to an answer to our posed question, the interviewees were also directly asked what they deemed significant differences and similarities between the two countries. This code was mentioned significantly less than the other ones. It was coded seventeen times with the Dutch interviews and five times with the Finnish interviews. While it points to shorter and fewer mentions of this topic, it does not mean the interviewees do not see differences between these countries, but rather that they did not explicitly mention them.

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[318] Sari Multala, March 2021

4.6.1 Dutch parliamentarians

The Dutch parliamentarians focused on two main differences that could impact female representation. The most prominent argument was made by six parliamentarians[319] and was about childcare and maternity leave. They argue that childcare is much more accepted and prominent in Finland than in the Netherlands and the regulations surrounding parental/maternity leave are much more equal. The second argument, presented by the parliamentarians of the VVD[320], PvdA[321], and CU[322], focused on the prominence of role models within Finnish politics. The substantive number of women that lead the country incentivises women to be more ambitious and go into politics themselves. Finally, the way education is organised, especially with the way teachers are educated within Finland, has a significant influence on the egalitarian society of Finland, according to the politicians of the D66[323] and GL.[324] They argue that teachers in Finland are all academically trained and that children are treated in a more equal way from a young age than in the Netherlands. This helps women to be as ambitious as men, according to them.

4.6.2 Finnish parliamentarians

Finnish parliamentarians also focused on childcare in their answer and first discussed the state of affairs in Finland. Parliamentarians from the KoK[325] and RKP[326] also argued that childcare has significantly improved in Finland over time. In the Netherlands part-time work is still more accepted because of a shortage of childcare outside the home. The politician of the SK[327] states that the Netherlands has more female representation than most other countries and that it is not just the Netherlands or Finland that need to improve, it is the whole world.

4.6.3 Comparison

This final code shows a considerable unanimity between the two groups of politicians. Both feel as though childcare should be improved upon in the Netherlands. Furthermore, a few Dutch politicians commend the amount of role models that Finland currently has in politics. This egalitarian way of taking care of children seems to be the number one cause of the difference

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[319] Sandra Beckerman (SP, January 2021), Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet (CDA, January 2021), Bente Becker (VVD, February 2021), Kirsten van den Hul (PvdA, January 2021), Carla Dik-Faber (CU, January 2021), and Eva van Esch (PvdD, February 2021).
[320] Bente Becker, February 2021
[321] Kirsten van den Hul, January 2021
[322] Carla Dik-Faber, January 2021
[323] Salima Belhaj, February 2021
[324] Laura Bromet, January 2021
[325] Sari Multala, March 2021
[326] Eva Biaudet, January 2021
[327] Eeva Kalli, February 2021

between the Netherlands and Finland according to the female parliamentarians that were interviewed. The difference in how these countries view paid and unpaid work seem to be lying underneath these arguments.

5. Discussion

The results discussed above show different outcomes. To fully understand the outcomes and place them within the current debate the results will be shortly summarised, while being compared to the existing literature.

Both Dutch and Finnish parliamentarians argue that female representation is important, however, gender equality has not been reached within politics and this leaves room for improvement. Both countries argued that the development over the last twenty years has been disappointing and that female representation should be growing more rapidly. However, female role models did change the way we view women in politics somewhat, which they view as a positive development. This aligns with Paxton and Kunovich, who argue that a lack of female representation leads to legislation that is solely catered to men.[328] This also fits with Turunen and Bourque and Grossholtz' statements that a patriarchal structure is still present in contemporary politics which manifests itself as masculinity being seen as the correct behaviour in politics.[329] The female parliamentarians continue on this argument as well, stating that there are gendered expectations towards women within politics and society, although the kind of expectations differ. Moreover, a masculine standard of behaviour in politics is noted by all politicians, although the Finnish interviewees state more explicitly that this is a masculine standard.

In addition to this, both interviewed groups talk about feminine and masculine standards and how feminine qualities are more negatively connotated. The Finnish politicians argue that women are treated differently than men in the same jobs. This should not be normalised according to the politicians. This argument can lead to questions about the way women are perceived in the workplace: What happens when women enter places that were historically reserved for men? Do they have to fit into a masculine mould or would equality be reached when gender is not relevant to their work? The politicians from GL[330], PvdA[331] and CU[332] give arguments that closely relate to this. They argue that significant representation is reached when people identify themselves with a representative regardless of gender. A point should be reached where gender should not matter as much as the work of a politician does. This aligns

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[328] Kunovich and Paxton, 'Pathways to Power'.
[329] Turunen, 'Ministers and Female Ministers: Reproduction of Masculinity in Political Leadership'; Bourque and Grossholtz, 'Politics an Unnatural Practice: Political Science Looks at Female Participation'.
[330] Lisa Westerveld, January 2021
[331] Kirsten van den Hul, January 2021
[332] Carla Dik-Faber, January 2021

with critical mass theory; a minoritised group has reached enough representation to actively change policy and can represent people outside their own group.[333]

Considering the literature on the influence of language on female representation the negative connotation with feminine qualities as described by the politicians is not surprising. Several authors discuss how women are associated with different language than men, often relating negatively to women within politics.[334] This is pursuant to Lakoff's argument where she states that women are excluded from politics in contemporary western culture because women would supposedly be uncomfortable with power.[335] Besides this exclusion, the negative connotation of feminine qualities is argued by several academics as well; leadership is associated with masculine traits and female leaders are described with different adjectives, therefore not adhering to the mould of what leadership is.[336] Both groups of parliamentarians explain that women's treatment differs from men within politics and within society at large, seeing this as one of the roots of the problem of improving female representation. Interestingly, only the Finnish parliamentarians saw a significant difference in hate speech between men and women, the latter being targeted to a greater extent.

Other causes include the still present patriarchal system and the lack of adequate childcare, the latter being especially significant in the Netherlands. Following this, Lombardo, Kantola and Lakoff argue that women are clearly treated differently in politics due to old stereotypes.[337] In line with the argument made by some Dutch politicians, Lakoff affirms women's appearance is talked about more often than men's.[338] Another cause for the lack of female representation that was argued in the Netherlands is the role of gatekeepers in politics, mainly embodied by political parties. This argument was mentioned by several academics[339], Hessami and da Fonseca among them, arguing that party leaders are biased against women and that institutional

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[333] Raaum, 'Gender Equality and Political Representation'; Childs and Krook, 'Critical Mass Theory and Women's Political Representation'.

[334] Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'; Talbot, 'Gender Stereotypes: Reproduction and Challenge'; Wodak, 'Multiple Identities: The Roles of Female Parliamentarians in the EU Parliament'.

[335] Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'.

[336] Kunovich, Paxton, and Hughes, 'Gender in Politics'; Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'; Talbot, 'Gender Stereotypes: Reproduction and Challenge'.

[337] Lombardo et al., 'Taming the Male Sovereign? Framing Gender Inequality in Politics in the European Union and the Member States'; Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'; Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'.

[338] Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'.

[339] Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'; Hessami and da Fonseca, 'Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies'; Bird, 'The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities'; Lovenduski et al., 'Conclusions'; Kunovich and Paxton, 'Pathways to Power'; Verloo, *Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality: A Critical Frame Analysis of Gender Policies in Europe*; Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.

barriers prevent female representation from growing.[340] The Dutch politicians argued that to increase female representation special attention should be paid to increasing the focus of political parties on recruiting women to tackle their gatekeeping role. However, women should also step up and take initiative to go into politics according to several Dutch, and one Finnish, politicians. Two Dutch politicians[341] classified the disproportionality of women working part-time as a 'problem', because they achieve less high-ranking positions due to this. They argue that women work part-time because they do more unpaid care work and on top of this choose to have more free time. Moreover, parliamentarians from D66[342], GL[343], CU[344] and PvdD[345] argue that women are not pro-active enough and should be more confident. These politicians thus look at women's choices as a significant cause. However, the question can be posed whether this is a *problem* and a *choice* or if it can be placed within the debate about the current societal structure? Women are disadvantaged by the societal structure that expects women to take on more of the unpaid care work while providing insufficient childcare. Moreover, the state inherently plays a role in this work division, given how labour policies have historically favoured men and neglected women.[346] The literature also discusses the need to recruit more women, explaining that due to norms and traditional gender roles in society women may be less inclined to run, which political parties then use to legitimise the lack of women.[347] In other words, a cycle can be seen in which women are more likely to work less because of insufficient childcare, which gatekeepers then use to justify their actions in keeping out women, because they do not work enough to achieve high-ranking positions according to them.

During the interviews the discussion about intersectionality of race and class was rarely mentioned. While the focus of the interviews was on the representation of women, this still is significant to mention. The interviewed politicians were almost all white and had been parliamentarians for a few years. The overall privileged position they hold could have an impact on how they view representation. Future research could focus on gaining insights into the opinions of female parliamentarians on the intersectionality of race, class and other aspects of identity.

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[340] Hessami and da Fonseca, 'Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies'.
[341] Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet (January 2021) and Bente Becker (February 2021)
[342] Salima Belhaj, February 2021
[343] Laura Bromet, January 2021
[344] Carla Dik-Faber, January 2021
[345] Eva van Esch, February 2021
[346] Kabeer, 'Gender Equality, Economic Growth, and Women's Agency'.
[347] Hessami and da Fonseca, 'Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies'; Bird, 'The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities'.

Looking at the discussed solutions, the politicians agreed that improving parental leave and childcare would improve the circumstances for combining work and domestic life. This, in turn, would give women more agency to move into politics. Hessami and da Fonseca agree with this, stating that improving these conditions would better female representation.[348] Another solution argued by several Dutch politicians was not mentioned by their Finnish counterparts: the need for more role models. Seeing as descriptive representation is a vital component of this thesis, this difference gives a unique insight into these two cases, highlighting the Dutch emphasis on descriptive representation. Congruent with the Dutch argument, Wolbrecht and Campbell argue that role models are imperative for increasing female representation.[349]

The differences in language use and arguments between these groups signal a difference in their stages of the equality struggle. It can be argued that Finland is in the so-called 'second generation' of the equality struggle, because they do not talk about merely elevating women, but also discuss tackling the privileged position of men. This can be seen for example in the way Dutch politicians emphasised 'maternity leave', while the Finnish politicians discussed 'parental leave'. Moreover, the Finnish parliamentarians discussed trading male leadership for female leadership and creating attitude change in education, while the Dutch parliamentarians talked about gatekeepers within politics and encouraging women to enter the political arena. It seems as though these Dutch issues are not (or no longer) present in Finland.

Finally, both Finnish and Dutch parliamentarians agree that a significant difference between the countries is that the Netherlands does not have the same standard of parental leave and childcare as Finland does. Moreover, the Dutch politicians believe Finland also has had more female role models in leadership positions throughout time. This further demonstrates the Dutch focus on descriptive representation. Interestingly, the differences in childcare and parental leave are not discussed in the literature, highlighting the significance of my empirical research.

Through interviewing female parliamentarians this thesis has aimed to understand what lies behind the discrepancy in female representation between the Netherlands and Finland. Analysing personal reflections from a top-down perspective has provided new insights and solutions on this topic that have not been discussed before. The interviews show that Finland has better provisions for parental leave and childcare and their political parties do not actively seem to be gatekeeping, as opposed to Dutch politics. Furthermore, the solutions that were

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[348] Hessami and da Fonseca, 'Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies'.
[349] Wolbrecht and Campbell, 'Leading by Example'.

argued included more aid for combining work and domestic life through parental leave and childcare. The Dutch politicians also argued, when discussing the causes of the current level of female representation, for more focus on improving political parties' stance on female representation, encouraging women to actively participate, and battling gendered expectations in politics.

Conclusion

Summarising the results show that both groups of parliamentarians feel that female representation should increase and gendered expectations in favour of masculine and countering feminine qualities are present and obstructive. Moreover, the development of female representation has been unsatisfactory in the last twenty years, for both countries, and following the interviews and the literature on this topic shows that patriarchal structures have complicated female representation. According to the politicians, causes as to why female representation is not growing are the presence of gatekeepers within politics, a lack of aid to help combine work and domestic life, and women's own restraint to go into politics. Suggested solutions include improving childcare, getting political parties to focus more on women, and, more generally, not upholding gendered expectations in politics. This ties into the main difference between the Netherlands and Finland, mentioned by the politicians, which is the provision of childcare and parental leave in Finland as opposed to the Netherlands. Most politicians argued that once this is improved in the Netherlands, female representation will be easier to increase.

This all leads to the answer of the research question: "**what are the causes for the disparity in female political representation between the Netherlands and Finland from a top-down perspective and how can this be improved?**" Following the data, the disparity is caused by better childcare and parental leave in Finland in comparison to the Netherlands. Moreover, the disparity can be improved through increasing provision for childcare and parental leave, more focus within Dutch politics on political parties' gatekeeping roles, being aware of gendered expectations in politics, and encouraging women to join the political world.

Outlining the literature on this topic has showed the historical development of gender relations in Europe and the way patriarchal relations started in the Western world from the middle ages onward, resulting in the way the patriarchal structure presents in today's society.[350] Following the three feminist waves, suffrage, labour rights, and gender constructs were developed over time.[351] Several arguments describe the need for further improving equality between genders,

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[350] Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Boyd and Primitive Accumulation*; Patil, 'From Patriarchy to Intersectionality'; Shields, 'Passionate Men, Emotional Women'; Walby, 'Comparative Analysis of Gender Relations in Employment in Western Europe'; Verloo and Lombardo, 'Contested Gender Equality and Policy Variety in Europe: Introducing a Critical Frame Analysis Approach'.

[351] Holli and Kantola, 'A Politics for Presence: State Feminism, Women's Movements and Political Representation in Finland'; Bosch, 'History and Historiography of First-Wave Feminism in the Netherlands, 1860-1922'; Meijer, *Het persoonlijke wordt politiek*; Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 'The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation, 1893–2003'; Verloo, 'Gender Knowledge, and Opposition to the Feminist Project'; Snyder, 'What Is Third-Wave Feminism?'

while also discussing causes for the lack of representation.[352] The discussion showed that patriarchal structures and stereotypes in society obstruct women from wanting to engage, and gatekeepers, specifically political parties, complicate women participating in politics because of their bias towards women.[353] Illustrating the historical developments and background of the two case studies preceded discussion about the influence of language. Different language is used to describe women and feminine qualities are approached differently than masculine ones, favouring the latter.[354] Given this, this thesis has contributed to existing feminist literature, while enriching it at the same time.

This thesis has provided the understudied top-down personal perspective. By using personal objectives, statements from previous research were tested and, in some cases, confirmed. Gendered expectations, language influence and the need for equality within politics was confirmed and gave a unique view from the inside out. Moreover, the connection between the history of gender and feminist studies was made through the discussion about gender biases and further representation. This research can be seen as the starting point for other in-depth personal research to follow.

The choice for a political representative standpoint provided focus on the issue of political representation while maintaining the freedom to gather politicians' views about labour and domestic life in relation to politics. Moreover, focusing on descriptive representation from a top-down perspective has rarely been done before in this way and serves as a starting point for future research. Imminent was making a clear distinction between sex and gender, and feminine and masculine. With this, masculine and feminine qualities could be discussed independently of gender. However, the focus of this thesis remained on women. While this framework limits the study to Western democracies, complicating generalisation, this thesis offers up frameworks

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[352] Orloff, 'Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship'; Kunovich and Paxton, 'Pathways to Power'; Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 'The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation, 1893–2003'; Lombardo et al., 'Taming the Male Sovereign? Framing Gender Inequality in Politics in the European Union and the Member States'; Childs and Krook, 'Critical Mass Theory and Women's Political Representation'.

[353] Hessami and da Fonseca, 'Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies'; Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Boyd and Primitive Accumulation*; Kunovich, Paxton, and Hughes, 'Gender in Politics'; Lombardo et al., 'Taming the Male Sovereign? Framing Gender Inequality in Politics in the European Union and the Member States'; Bird, 'The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities'; Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'; Lovenduski et al., 'Conclusions'; Verloo, 'Making Women Count in the Netherlands'; Leijenaar, *Political Empowerment of Women*.

[354] Lakoff, 'Multiple Identities'; Kantola, 'Women's Political Representation in the European Union'; Hagqvist, Gådin, and Nordenmark, 'Work–Family Conflict and Well-Being Across Europe'; Talbot, 'Gender Stereotypes: Reproduction and Challenge'; Wodak, 'Multiple Identities: The Roles of Female Parliamentarians in the EU Parliament'; Bourque and Grossholtz, 'Politics an Unnatural Practice: Political Science Looks at Female Participation'; Moller Okin, 'Gender the Public and the Private'.

for future research in other countries and can serve as a starting point for a comparative study between these and non-Western countries. Moreover, these outcomes invite further research where more genders can be included to shift the focus.

Finally, comparing the countries was done by analysing them as separate cases. Using semi-structured elite interviews combined with the use of ordinary-language, personal views and lived experiences were gathered from a group of nine Dutch and three Finnish female parliamentarians. This allowed for the interviews to flow more freely and for the interviewees to expand on their answers as well as for the interviewer to ask more follow-up questions. Analysing these interviews was done by transcribing and subsequently coding them. The codes were collected in a single file and compared for analysis.[355]

Considering the conclusions, future research could focus on the gatekeeping role of political parties and the conditions surrounding childcare in the Netherlands. Moreover, research on the willingness of women to participate in politics could be valuable to reflect on the bottom-up view that counters this research. Finally, enriching this line of research and broadening the options for comparison can be done by focusing on other Western European countries that struggle with female representation. Broadening the research on representation and considering solutions for the increase of the number of women and other minoritised groups in parliament would not merely enrich the literature but could benefit the political world.

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[355]The codes are: gendered expectations, female representation, difference between the Netherlands and Finland, solutions, causes, and development over time

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Appendix A: Interview questions

The following interview questions were asked to each of the participants. Because of the choice for semi-structured interviews, the order differed and some additional questions were asked in several interviews. Question nine differed between the two cases because it asked about the specific historical development of the country.

1. How would you describe the current state of female representation in Finland/the Netherlands?

2. What is the biggest obstacle in creating more female representation in Finland/the Netherlands?

3. What has been the most significant improvement in female representation in the last twenty years?

4. Do you feel as though the political world or the parliament is very masculine?

5. Do you feel enough is done by the government to increase the amount of female representation?

6. Do you feel there is an expectation of certain behaviours while in politics? If so, do you associate those adjectives in behaviour with masculine and feminine?

7. Do you encounter difficulties with gender stereotypes in your work?

8. Is there a bias in the media and society against female ministers?

9. For Finland: What is your explanation for why Finland chose its first female minister early in 1926 and its first female prime minister only in the 2000's?
   For the Netherlands: What is your explanation for the fact that the Netherlands has never had a female Prime Minister and why there has never been a female minister for Finance or Social Affairs?

10. What still needs to happen for there to be enough female representation according to you?

11. Why do you think female representation has succeeded in Finland? And why do you think the Netherlands is behind?

Appendix B: Ideological affiliation of the interviewees

Table one and two in this appendix show the names of the various interviewees and connects them to their party and ideological position within the left-right political scale.

The Netherlands:

Table 1

Politician	Party	Ideological place	Coalition or opposition
Bente Becker	Liberal party, VVD	Right-wing	Coalition
Carla Dik-Faber	Christian Union, CU	Right-wing	Coalition
Eva van Esch	Party for the Animals, PvdD	Left-wing	Opposition
Kirsten van den Hul	Labour party, PvdA	Left-wing	Opposition
Laura Bromet	Green Left, GL	Left-wing	Opposition
Lenny Geluk-Poortvliet	Christian Democrats, CDA	Right-wing	Coalition
Lisa Westerveld	Green Left, GL	Left-wing	Opposition
Salima Belhaj	Democrats 66, D66	Centre	Coalition
Sandra Beckerman	Socialist Party, SP	Left-wing	Opposition

The difference between CDA and CU within the Dutch political landscape is difficult to translate, giving them both the label 'Christian democrat'. However, this label fits CDA best, while CU can be seen as more conservative and more to the right-wing of the political scale.

Finland:

Table 2

Politician	Party	Ideological place	Coalition or opposition
Eeva Kalli	Suomen Keskuta, Centre party, SK	Centre, liberal conservative and agrarian	Coalition

Eva Biaudet	Swedish People's party, RKP	(liberal) Centre	Coalition
Sari Multala	National Coalition Party, KoK	Centre-right	Opposition

Appendix C: Coding scheme

In the table 3 shown below the amount each term was coded can be seen as well as the total number of times the term was coded.[356]

Table 3

Codes	Female representation	Gendered expectations	Causes	Solutions	Differences NL-Finland	Development over time
Dutch politicians:	Seventy-eight times	One hundred five times	Sixty-two times	Sixty-two times	Seventeen times	Nineteen times
Finnish politicians:	Twenty-four times	Thirty-four times	Seventeen times	Eleven times	Five times	Eighteen times
Total number:	One hundred two times	One hundred thirty-nine times	Seventy-nine times	Seventy-three times	Twenty-two times	Thirty-seven times

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[356] Because of the length of the transcripts they were not included in this thesis. They can be viewed upon request.