Deeds and Words

Gendering Politics after Joni Lovenduski

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Recruiting contributors to this project – from both the academic and practitioner world – was a painless exercise; as all were keen to celebrate Joni Lovenduski’s contribution to political science and political life, and we are very grateful to them for making this project such a rewarding experience.

The ECPR Press have been incredibly helpful and encouraging and have enabled us to put together a Festschrift that we hope will be a useful text for researchers and students, as well as a fitting tribute to an esteemed scholar and dear friend.

Rosie Campbell and Sarah Childs
London, UK
September 2014
People sometimes deny that political science should be value-free because they think it should be value-relevant. But this is to confuse two quite different things. Value-relevance is the principle that the topics worth studying are those that are important. Value-freedom is the principle that, when studying important topics, we should not allow wishful thinking to interfere with our understanding. Identifying the causes of political processes and outcomes is to be guided by the best evidence available, not by what we hope or expect to be true in advance of research.

Among her many virtues, Joni Lovenduski has never confused value-relevance and value-freedom. She has been responsible for producing some of the best political science we have on the subject of women and politics, exemplifying the principle of value-relevance. Yet she has pursued her understanding even when the results show the facts to be more complicated than at first sight we might think. For example, she once showed that female candidate non-selection in UK constituencies is at least as much a function of supply – of women excluding themselves – than of demand – of bias against women by constituency parties. For many it would have been more convenient to have discovered the crucial role of prejudice on the demand side rather than reluctance on the supply side. Joni stuck with the evidence, just as she helped uncover the fact that younger women were less sympathetic to descriptive political representation than older women, despite their also rejecting traditional feminine roles. With further research, she later came to a different view about the relative importance of supply, but the change reflected the evidence.

A commitment to value-relevance also means a commitment to work for practical improvement. At a time when the academy is being urged to make an impact on the quality of social and public life, Joni stands as an exemplar of what it means to bring the results of one’s research to bear on fundamental political questions, for no one can deny the importance of political representation. In this volume a number of women who have been active in politics witness to the esteem in which she is held in the world of practice just as her academic colleagues witness to her role in the world of scholarly research.

In seeking to understand the barriers that have existed to women securing political office, Joni has not avoided the hard work of comparative inquiry, using cross-national evidence to explore the relationship between political institutions and gender politics. She has never been content with reciting generalities, but has explored how debates about gender in politics interact with dominant ideologies of the state and to what effect.

Good comparative empirical work requires good team work. Had Joni been born in an earlier generation, I sense that she might have been an activist in the US
garment workers’ union, with its slogan: ‘organise, organise!’ In modern political science cross-national comparative work means organisation, with its need for a careful definition of problems, an ability to raise funds, insistence on deadlines being met by collaborators and the knack of seeing how the whole can become more than the sum of its parts. Joni would be the first to acknowledge that without her international network she could not have accomplished what she has; in this volume the members of her network honour her for her role in making their combined work possible.

The same qualities of cooperation and commitment to the cause of political science have led people on many occasions and in many contexts always to insist on including Joni on important committees – whether as an Executive member of the U.K.’s Political Studies Association or of the European Consortium of Political Research or whether as a panel member in the UK’s Research Assessment Exercise. In all these important roles she has displayed that most valuable of combinations, independence of mind together with a willingness to work with others to find common solutions to pressing problems.

Listing these qualities makes it seem as though Joni embodies only the austere and puritanical virtues – commitment to a cause, intellectual integrity in research and administrative ability in organisation. Yet is there another political scientist who so evidently takes such pleasure in the senses, whether in the complex tastes of Italian cooking (always to be accompanied by fine wine) or the sights and smells of the garden or the back and forth of conversation? To hear her speak of how to cook a joint of meat is to understand how much intelligence enhances pleasure. To talk face to face with her is to understand how conversation can move from intellectual rigour to political engagement and then to the intimacies of personal friendship that is rooted in trust and good judgement. To contribute to this volume is to mark the achievements of a fine scholar but also the personal qualities of the warmest of friends.
Introduction: Deeds and Words

Rosie Campbell and Sarah Childs

This edited collection could have taken the standard scholarly framework – a series of discrete but nonetheless linked chapters that provide a ‘state of the art’ review of the sub-discipline of gender and politics. It would in this format, at least in our view, have done a valuable job for students of gender and politics, and would have been a fine tribute to Professor Joni Lovenduski, the pioneering gender and politics scholar in whose honour this book (a kind of Festschrift) is published. In so doing, it would also show how gender and politics scholarship speaks to the rest of political science, revealing that (male) gender has always been present in political science, and demonstrating how a re-gendering (feminising) of the discipline changes both what is studied and how it is studied; transforming our understanding of ‘the political’. But feminist gender and politics research, whilst about these and other things, is also about more than academic outputs; it is about changing the world; about being ‘of use’ beyond academia. As such the overarching narrative of Deeds and Words is the crucial role played by critical actors and ideas in politics and political science, and in feminising politics. It is for this reason that each academic contributor has been asked to reflect on the interaction between academic research and the practice of politics in the individual chapters. It is also why we have invited a series of leading practitioners of politics – whether Members of Parliaments, party professionals, political actors in civil society or the state, and gender activists – to reflect on how their activities, strategies and, or campaigns, have benefited from interaction with gender and politics scholarship and scholars. Our reasoning is straightforward; whilst the British Suffragettes and suffragists in the early 20th century demanded ‘deeds’ (for their words had failed to persuade the male political establishment to give them the vote); ‘deeds’ and ‘words’ very much went together in the late 20th century and should continue to do so in the 21st. We think this for two reasons: first feminist academics frequently are, and seek to be, both scholars and activists; secondly, as understandings of gender relations have become more sophisticated, addressing for example, issues of intersectionality and the complexity of power and its variation across space and time, feminist praxis demands engagement with ideas and debates.

Feminising politics

Feminising politics refers both to the (1) integration of women and (2) women’s concerns into politics (Lovenduski 2005). The former refers to the presence of women’s bodies in our institutions, whether these are political organisations, movements or parliaments. The latter refers to the inclusion on the political
agenda of women’s perspectives, issues and interests, noting that these are contested concepts.\(^1\) In both its dimensions feminisation reveals the gendered (read: masculinised) nature of politics: that men are nearly everywhere (all bar two lower houses in the world) over-represented in our formal political institutions (Murray 2012; www.ipu.org), and that the political agenda largely reflects men’s perspectives and concerns, and or fails to acknowledge that women may well have different attitudes even when they share concerns with men. In this book authors consider how electoral politics has been feminised over the last few decades. Vicky Randall (Chapter One) charts the development of the sub-discipline of gender and politics over the last couple of decades.

We do not seek to reproduce Randall’s analysis here. However we reiterate the claim that whilst gender and politics research started with the ‘simple counting’ of women’s bodies in our electoral institutions, today gender and politics scholars are also very much focused on a wider range of foci: women’s substantive representation (when representatives act for women), and albeit to a lesser and more recent extent, symbolic representation (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Celis \textit{et al}. 2007; Childs and Lovenduski 2012; Dovi 2007; Dovi 2010; Lovenduski \textit{et al}. 2005; Meier and Lombardo 2012). In addressing the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women, Chapter authors frequently emphasise the importance of context – spatial and temporal. A comparative approach importantly permits a more comprehensive understanding of what is going on and why. And even when scholarship is of a single case a comparative perspective throws more light, revealing causal and mediating factors. Many of our contributors, in common with much contemporary gender and politics research, also employ new institutional and, or feminist institutional approaches (Krook and MacKay 2010; Lovenduski 1998). These investigate institutional rules and norms, architecture and spaces, conventions and practices, and explore how changing gender relations can re-gender institutions (Lovenduski 1998).

\textbf{Making a difference: The feminist imperative\(^2\)}

In addition to presenting the latest research on gender and politics, \textit{Deeds and Words}, examines how feminist academics have influenced the ‘real’ world of politics – impact that is frequently overlooked within the wider academy. Universities in the UK became an important site for feminist politics after the peak of the second wave of feminism in the 1970s. Indeed, in the face of spending cuts in the 1980s, and alongside a depressingly successful media backlash, feminist academics in British university departments worked with the women’s movement to keep women’s issues on the political agenda. Pioneering feminist political scientists including Joni Lovenduski, Judith Evans, Annie Phizacklea,

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item What constitutes women’s issues and interests has generated extensive debate, \textit{see ‘Critical perspectives’}, Politics and Gender, 2012 for recent contributions.
\item This section draws on Campbell and Childs 2013.
\end{itemize}}
Chapter Two

The Comparative Study of Politics and Gender

Yvonne Galligan

Introduction

In 1986 Joni Lovenduski published *Women and European Politics: Contemporary Feminism and Public Policy*. This comparative study, whose geographical reach extended from Britain to Russia and its allied states, addressed three themes that are today major sub-fields in the comparative study of politics and gender: women’s political behaviour, women’s representation in political institutions, and sex equality policies. Around the same time, Pippa Norris (1987) assessed the impact of social democratic politics on progress towards gender equality, Wilma Rule (1987) compared women’s opportunities for election in 23 democracies, while Elina Haavio-Mannila and other feminist scholars (1985) compared the role of women in Nordic politics. Taken together, this body of research marked a seismic shift in the study of women and politics. The false universalities of women’s political behaviour (such as, because women were less politically knowledgeable than men, they were devoid of political opinions, Bourque and Grossholtz 1984: 118) prevalent in mainstream comparative studies were challenged by this generation of feminist scholars. Lovenduski’s (1986: 4) observation of the paucity of comparative accounts of European women’s political engagement invited feminist scholars of politics to explore this emerging field. In the course of this journey, the focus on women has been nuanced by the conceptual development of the notion of gender, underscoring the relational character of power, politics and the public sphere.

This chapter assesses the extent to which this shift in approach has taken place in the major comparative areas of gender politics (identified by Lovenduski in 1986): political behaviour, institutions, and public policy. It suggests that while sex and gender have been subject to extensive political theorising, and while there

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1. In 2005, two decades later, Lovenduski was still to the fore in breaking new comparative ground, in *State Feminism and Political Representation*, with other scholars from the Research Network on Gender, Politics and the State (RNGS) consortium. In the intervening period marked by these two publications, she played a leading role in developing feminist comparative politics in Europe from a comparative politics and women/gender orientation, and towards a comparative politics of gender.
Deeds and Words: Gendering Politics

is a flourishing comparative research agenda underway in Europe, there is more to be done in integrating this knowledge into feminist and mainstream empirical research. In some areas, questions of women’s inclusion are the focus of attention, implying that men and male behaviour is the norm and that women’s participation and presence needs to be explained. In other areas, comparative studies of gender and politics continue to rely on single country or issue case studies in collections of essays prefaced with integrative introductory chapters. But in other aspects of gender politics, notably new feminist institutionalism and public policy, conceptual and empirical breakthroughs have provided the tools for a comparative politics of gender to emerge. This scholarship is identified by its interrogation of ‘the extent to which gender is a major and primary constitutive element of political power’ (Beckwith 2010: 160). There is still some way to go, though, before the theoretical, methodological and empirical richness of feminist scholarship is integrated into mainstream comparative politics.

Comparative political behaviour

The study of political behaviour has a long tradition in comparative politics, dating back to the 1930s (Cantril with Strunk 1951; Barnes and Kaase 1979), and has had a formative influence on the discipline of political science. An embedded assumption – and indeed finding – in much of this research is that women are less interested in politics than men. This deduction is based on women’s higher ‘Don’t Know’ response rate to the questions asked in public opinion surveys. It has coloured perceptions of women’s citizenship, their role as political actors, and assessments of the quality of women’s political agency. In 1955, French political scientist Maurice Duverger analysed women’s voting patterns, candidatures, legislative representation, party involvement and pressure group engagement in four European countries in the first half of the twentieth century. This was the first cross-national and longitudinal study of women’s political behaviour, and its findings did not challenge the emerging view in political science of women’s subordinate political behaviour. In brief, Duverger found that women were somewhat less likely to vote than men, were slightly more conservative, and that married couples tended to vote similarly. His analysis, along with that of many other comparative scholars at the time and thereafter, was handicapped by an inability to theorise political behaviour in a way that distinguished between sex and gender. His explanations were grounded in an essentialist view of gendered political behaviour: men were innately warlike, and women were predisposed to being subordinate to men. In an early critique of this reductionist view of women’s political behaviour, Susan Bourque and Jean Grossholtz (1984: 119) argued ‘It is clear that the assumptions being made here exclude those interests about which women are most concerned’. Yet three decades on, the extensive literature on political behaviour in its many forms treats sex as but one of many variables; survey questions seldom explore male-female differences in policy orientations; and gender as a relational concept in interpreting political behaviour is absent from analytical discussion. Indeed, in reviewing the state of comparative research
from a feminist standpoint, Lisa Baldez (2010: 199) comments that even today overviews of the field ignore, or dismiss, a gender-focused analysis. Thus, while feminist comparativists frame their research in terms of the gaps, omissions and oversights in the mainstream literature, the mainstream field with rare exceptions (e.g. Inglehart 1981; Mayer and Smith 1985; Banaszak and Plutzer 1993; Hayes et al. 2000) continues to ignore gender, treating sex as an ‘add women and stir’ variable (Weldon 2006: 246).

The continued resistance of comparative political behaviour specialists to incorporating a gendered analysis into their work, despite the efforts of feminist political scientists, is disappointing. Nonetheless, feminist scholars continue to forge ahead, identifying the gaps in mainstream research and designing questions that seek to uncover the gendered nature of political behaviour. A recent contribution in this vein is that of Hilde Coffé and Catherine Bolzendahl (2010) who investigated gender gaps in political participation for 18 advanced Western democracies, using linear and logistic regression models. They provide evidence to show that recent research on political participation offers too narrow a conceptualisation of political engagement, returning to Bourque and Grossholtz (1984) and others who had earlier pointed out that ‘women do not participate less, but rather, participate differently’ (2010: 320). Their task was to identify and explain these gender differences in political participation. They found that women were much more likely than men to engage in private activism (i.e. sign petitions, boycott products for political reasons) because such participation could be most readily accommodated to the pattern of women’s lives. They also questioned received wisdom of women’s and men’s electoral behaviour which holds that women and men generally have the same propensity to vote. Their analysis showed that when attitudinal positions were controlled, women were in fact more likely to vote than men. Finally, they found that controlling for attitudinal characteristics significantly decreased the gender gap in party membership, collective activism, and in their contact of, and with, politicians. In explaining the remaining gender differences in political activity, they offered a nuance on the accepted economic, socialisation and family-based explanations: private activism was boosted by labour force participation; collective activism was heavily dependent on time resources; while differences in political contact flowed from the different socialisation processes to which women and men are subject. Coffé and Bolzendahl, then, bring to the fore new questions about the gender gap in political behaviour, with consequences for politics, political outcomes, and gender equality.

In a study of women’s economic, social and political position in western democracies, Pippa Norris (1987) sought to assess the impact of Left-wing and socialist parties on progress toward sexual equality. As a comparative study, it highlighted women’s exclusion from economic and political power and at the time opened cross-national research on the interaction of sex, gender and political institutions. However, its under-theorisation of sex and gender meant that it provided a relatively weak explanatory framework in which to situate observed country differences. Later, electoral studies undertaken by feminist researchers offered more fine-grained analyses of gender differences (e.g. Giger 2009)
Chapter Six

Women, Gender Politics and the State: The Words and Deeds of RNGS

Amy G. Mazur and Dorothy E. McBride

The long campaign to gender the state, that is, to make gender differences explicitly part of the state’s processes and policies in Western democracies, took a new turn when states formally incorporated the idea of women/gender by charging structures explicitly with the task of promoting the status of women and achieving gender equality.¹ Whether such structures, called women’s policy agencies and gender equality mechanisms, have had any effect on state power structures or policies was the question that inspired the work of the Research Network on Gender, Politics and the State (RNGS).² Over seventeen years of collaboration, researchers in the network completed rigorous comparative studies exploring the effectiveness of over seventy gender equality mechanisms in thirteen Western postindustrial democracies. Of special interest was their ability to respond to demands of women’s movement activists over the last thirty years of the 20th century. A final outcome of this research was a new politics and theory of state feminism elaborated in the capstone book, The Politics of State Feminism: Innovation in Comparative Research (McBride and Mazur 2010).

This chapter looks at the contributions of RNGS research to scholarship and practices in the campaign to gender the state in Western democracies; first is a focus on how the new politics of state feminism has changed conventional approaches to thinking about and studying women and the state. The chapter goes on to link these research outcomes – the ‘words’ of RNGS—RNGS ‘deeds’. It reviews how RNGS findings and methods have informed policy discussions and decisions about women’s rights and gender equality in the political arena by looking at nine instances in four venues: policy recommendations to governmental organisations; research funded by women’s policy agencies; expert reports to international organisations; dissemination to and networking with policy practitioners and activists.

¹. This occurred in Western democracies beginning in the 1970s with a few exceptions (U.S. 1920; France 1965; Canada 1954).
². Everything you ever wanted to know about RNGS can be found on the RNGS website: http://libarts.wsu.edu/pppa/rngs/html.
RNGS words: The new politics of state feminism

This first section presents a survey of the implications of the new politics and theory of state feminism for understanding the complexity embodied in the study of women’s movements, women’s policy agencies, and gendering the state. The findings described here are possible due to RNGS’ rigorous scientific approach to qualitative and quantitative comparative conceptualisation, data collection, and analysis. Many of the research results were unexpected or contrary to conventional assumptions. Thus, in addition to summarising research results, this section serves as an inventory of the latest contributions to the field. We cover five topics: ideas about women, gender politics and the state and how to study the topic; how women’s movements speak for women; women’s movements’ success with the state; variation, comparison and explanation of findings; and representation of women through state feminism (Lovenduski and Guadagnini 2010).3

Ideas about women, gender politics and the state and how to study the topic

What is the state? Any effort to answer that question is likely to encounter a variety of views, from seeing states as monolithic patriarchal entities acting almost as individuals to seeing only blurred distinctions between states, governments and groups. Thirty years of studying women’s movement activism has convinced many, including RNGS, that the idea of the monolithic state is not only unhelpful, but blinds those who assume it to be that way to what is really going on. RNGS found that the state comprises a variety of arenas for political action and debate, which validates work such as that by Pringle and Watson (1992). In this context, the state is permeable to advocates for change not always or inevitably but possibly and observably. Thus, advocates for women and gender equality women’s movement actors can get access to the inside workings of the state.

Not only is the state open to pressure by activists from outside, it is likely that agencies inside the state will act as advocates for movement goals in policy debates as they did in 66 per cent of the cases in the RNGS research. When gender equality mechanisms are able to influence the terms of debates in policy subsystems such as on abortion reform or job training and to insert gendered ideas derived from women’s movements, the result weakens the male gender-based ‘logic of appropriateness’ that policy actors have assumed.4 In other words,

3. This is a direct link to the contributions of Joni Lovenduski to the RNGS capstone analysis. We see through Joni Lovenduski’s life’s work and RNGS’ policy activities a roadmap for building bridges between science and politics where gender expertise grounded in the scientific method and rigorously designed studies serves as the path to the development of effective authoritative policies and structures that promote gender equality and women’s rights. Ultimately, we believe, these endeavours can make democracies more democratic and improve lives of women and men.

4. This notion was first elaborated in early non feminist work on new institutionalism. Chappell (2006) and others, including Joni Lovenduski, have identified the gender bias of institutions in terms of a gender-biased ‘logic of appropriateness’.
women’s policy agencies forming temporary alliances with women’s movement actors and presenting their views can, for one policy moment, gender the state to represent women’s interests. Multiply such moments by many agencies, debates and countries, and we can see how new institutionalism can become feminist institutionalism.\(^5\)

Thus, feminist criticism that the state is by definition resistant to gendering and the inclusion of women must be set aside as an assumption for research. Rather, whether or not the state will change to incorporate feminised ideas and advocates for women must become a question for empirical research. RNGS shows that states have accepted a changed gendering. Therefore, it’s possible...let’s find out when, where and why.

**How women’s movements speak for women**

Although individual women are fully capable of speaking for themselves and making their wishes known, it is women’s movements that express many of the ideas and goals of women in societies. Despite decades of research on social movements, reliable knowledge about the impact of movements on states and state structures remains limited. We have found that one of the problems with studying the ways that women’s movements speak to the state on behalf of women has been weak conceptualisation of movements – both social movements and women’s movements (McBríde and Mazur 2008).

To conduct the RNGS study as well as future research on movements and the state we discovered that two assumptions are key. First, is the analytical separation of movement discourse from those actors that are part of movements. Movement discourse is the range of ideas and desires developed by women as they think about their place as women in society. The discourse is the essential core of any movement and separates it from other phenomena in a political society. At the same time, since the discourse is likely to be as varied as the women who produce it, it is impossible to study more than a tiny part of the production of discourse empirically. Women’s movement actors, however, are those entities, formal and informal groups, that – articulate movement discourse in the public sphere. Actors and their statements are eminently observable.

The second key assumption is to remove the element of protest as an essential dimension of the definition of social movements and women’s movements. Most social movement research relies on nominal definitions that require contentious activism against the state as a defining element of any social movement. However, especially when looking at women’s movements, such a requirement prevents inquiry into a range of interactions with state actors and in policy arenas. It is important to make discovering the ways movements approach states a question for empirical research. This opens the way to see penetration by women’s movement actors of state institutions and activities as well as protest against them.

\(^5\) An important focus of Joni Lovenduski’s oeuvre.
Feminist engagement with policy research and practice has, over several decades, highlighted how much apparently non-gendered research, policies and interventions that focused on people in general have often in practice focused on men, and on specific groups of men. This has been true across many fields including the medical sciences, social research, and policy (British Medical Association 2008). The lack of attention to differences in experiences and outcomes for different segments of the population has led to an examination of how existing policies and interventions may specifically affect and potentially disadvantage women, ethnic minorities, and others. In gender and policy analysis the retrospective assessment of how existing policies and practices affect women and men differently has been complemented in certain areas by a more prospective gendered approach, integrating a gendered lens into the development of policy and practice by considering the particular needs of, and challenges to equality or improved outcomes. Starting with questions about whether and how women are experiencing different and worse outcomes relative to men, where women are doing well, or asking about barriers to improving their outcomes in areas in which they are not, builds in gender awareness that can inform the development of new approaches and how to implement them.

Attempts to re-gender policy has been especially visible in certain areas that have evident implications for women, and around which women themselves have campaigned for change (Lovenduski and Randall 1993).

Feminist researchers and policy practitioners have collectively offered critiques of apparently non-gendered policy, policy making, and policy outcomes. They have sought to identify who the policy actors are, what possibilities exist for a re-gendering of policy, and where and when policy-making structures and processes are most conducive to feminist intervention. There has been much discussion of what counts as ‘gendered policy’ and what constitutes ‘gender policy’. The issues feminist activists have mobilised have also been identified; and how policy concerns are framed have been revealed. Given that dynamics of the policy making process vary by sector and issue, researchers have focused in on the policy sub-system. In this respect, feminist practitioners need to identify arguments which are likely to be attractive to policy makers in the field and can be deployed strategically to maximise the chances of feminist policy change.

The chapter consists of two sections. In its main body, traditional policy typologies – notably Lowi’s – are subjected to a feminist re-reading before
consideration is given to a series of feminist typologies. In respect of the latter, particular note is given to Amy Mazur’s distinction between ‘body politics I’, which covers reproductive rights’, and ‘body politics II’ which covers sexuality and violence against women. This distinction is useful because it maps into the distinction between ‘position’ and ‘valence’ issues. The former refers to issues in which there is no consensus about the goals and the means of a policy (e.g. abortion), whereas in the latter, people agree on the goal but not on the means (ending violence against women) (Outshoorn 1986). Htun and Weldon’s typology moreover makes an analytical distinction which allows for cultural flexibility in classifying issues - including body issues - making classification an empirical exercise. The latter part of this chapter comprises a case study of gendered immigration policy in the EU. The example of EU funded migration research undertaken by a private research organisation (RAND) is discussed in order to demonstrate how employing a gendered lens improves policy analysis. In so doing, the impact of formal gender mainstreaming on EU policy analysis is traced.

Gender policies and issue classification – Joyce Outshoorn

Researchers working on feminist public policy generally agree that policy dynamics are, generally, highly issue specific. The constellation of interests around each issue is different, with different actors. The debates and decision making often take place in different arenas such as parliament, a ministry, a court or in a corporatist institution. Amy Mazur has stated that there is no single policy style or pattern of sectoralisation across entire sectors of gender policies, and that there are few systematic patterns in either policy profiles or styles across different types of countries (Mazur 2002). On the basis of the findings of the Research Network on Gender, Politics and the State (RNGS) project on women’s movement impact and state feminism, McBride and Mazur also concluded that political dynamics vary by policy sector, but not according to typical regional classification, although some country patterns can be observed (McBride and Mazur 2010). In the Quality in Gender and Equality Policies (QUING) project, Andrea Krizsán et al. found issue-specific differences in several respects, such as participation of women’s civil society groups and attention by authorities to their demands (Krizsán et al. 2010). In line with these insights, Mala Htun and Laurel Weldon, in developing their framework for comparing women’s legal rights across very different political systems, made the case for the need of disaggregating gender policy issues to reveal the different policy dynamics (Htun and Weldon 2010). In the political science and policy mainstream, in the important tradition of issue-classification following from the work of Theodore Lowi, scholars have always maintained that ‘politics’ follows policy, i.e. that the kind of policy determines arenas, actors and alliances – the stuff of politics (Lowi 1964, 1972). Both the work in this tradition and in feminist public policy analysis thus point to the need of focusing on the policy subsystem for the analysis of gender issues and their outcomes.
Given the importance of policy sectors and the diversity of issues making up feminist public policy or gender equality policy, there is a definite need for classifying gender issues, but there is no consensus on how best to do so. In the following section, current categorisations of gender issues using ‘body issues’ as an illustrative case study are interrogated.

**The case of ‘body issues’**

Body issues, such as reproductive rights and (sexual) violence, have preoccupied second wave feminism since its beginning in the late 1960s, and have generally, if one combines reproductive rights with fighting violence against women, been the highest priority of women’s movements over the last decades (Outshoorn 2010). A step forward in understanding the policy dynamics of body issues requires scholars to disaggregate these from the overarching concept of ‘gender policy’ or feminist public policy.

Why is the classification of issues important, despite the continual tension between institutionalist approaches that set out to classify issues on underlying structural cleavages, and social constructionist approaches which stress that framing contests between actors determine the type of issues? Classification is necessary for systematic comparison and the precision of concepts, but is not just an academic exercise. It is important for feminist activists, as it permits the mapping of the politics around particular issues and highlights the importance of strategic framing. Strategic framing refers to defining issues in such a way that policy actors are more likely to adopt the feminist demands. As political scientist Elmer Schattschneider maintained more than fifty years ago, at the core of any political conflict is the definition of the issue: ‘[…] the definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power’, the antagonists can rarely agree on what the issues are because power is involved in the definition. He who determines what politics is about runs the country, because the definition of the alternatives is the choice of conflicts, and the choice of conflicts allocates power’ (Schattschneider 1960: 68 emph. in orig.). The outcome allocates control over the issue, responsibility, benefits and costs for others. For instance, political decisions in the past have given the medical profession power over abortions and power to family household heads over its female members. Framing abortion as a public health issue, or prostitution as a problem for public order, for example, will invite less opposition than if they are framed as moral issues.

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1. Following Mazur (2002: 25) I will use the term ‘feminist public policy’ instead of ‘gender equality policy’, as it is more encompassing, notably on the point of reproductive rights and other ‘body’ issues. For the latter, equality is not the aim, as they are about the specificity of the female body. ‘Autonomy’ and ‘self-determination’ are generally the aim of body issues. In many countries, gender equality policies do not include reproductive rights, while violence against women is included. Htun and Weldon (2010: 208) distinguish gender equality policy and sex equality policy – the latter is a narrower subcategory of the former, not focusing on normative heterosexuality. In their article they use the two categories interchangeably (2010: 213 n.10).