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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Complex, Conditional, and Contested: Substantive Representation and Representative Claims in French Parliamentary Debates

Rainbow Murray

Department of Politics and International Relations, Queen Mary University of London, London, United Kingdom
Email: r.r.murray@qmul.ac.uk

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Abstract

Measuring the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation presents empirical and theoretical challenges. This article makes a distinctive empirical contribution that draws on the latest theoretical developments on the substantive representation of women (SRW). I provide an explorative qualitative analysis of representative claims in French parliamentary debates over a twenty-year period. I focus on three core questions: *who* is making claims? *What* are the claims saying? *Which* women are represented by the claims? The analysis considers the interplay between these questions and finds that SRW is complex and full of contestations. Most SRW comes from women and parties of the left, while most resistance (anti-SRW) comes from men and parties of the right. However, some women cross party lines to work together, while ideological differences emerge between women sharing descriptive traits. Crucially, I find that support for SRW is often restricted to claims that uphold the gendered and racialized status quo.

Keywords: substantive representation; Parliaments; descriptive representation; representative claims; France; qualitative content analysis

Mobilization around the world to improve descriptive representation within parliaments has been driven, in part, by the expectation that there will be a corresponding improvement in the substantive representation of under-represented groups. However, measuring the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation is not straightforward. Scholarship on the

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substantive representation of women (SRW) has struggled to reach agreement on "what it is and should be about?" (Celis 2009: 95). One major challenge is the role of ideology; not all women are feminists, not all feminists are women, and the definition of feminism itself is contested. This has led scholars to consider the role of individual critical actors as agents of change, and to question whether non-feminist acts on behalf of women still count as SRW (Childs and Krook 2009; Celis and Childs 2012). Another challenge is the heterogeneity of women; any analysis of SRW must acknowledge intersectionality while avoiding essentialism (Siow 2023a; Smooth 2011). There has been a shift from objectivist notions of "women's interests" to constructivist studies of representative claims and the constitutive representation of gender (Celis et al. 2014; Squires 2008). Most recently, scholars have debated whether we should be focusing on the process rather than the outputs of representation to determine whether it qualifies as SRW (Celis and Childs 2018, 2020).

These debates have done much to improve our conceptual understanding of SRW, but they present challenges for empirical analysis. To really understand "what is going on *in* representation," any analysis needs to take account of the theoretical complexity of measuring SRW (Saward 2006: 298; original emphasis). Empirical research on SRW offers important insights about who makes claims and in which areas, but the quantitative focus of most studies makes it harder to appreciate the contexts and subtleties of different claims (Erzeel and Celis 2016; Erzeel and Rashkova 2023; O'Brien 2018; Siow 2023a). A qualitative approach is better able to appreciate the framing and nuances embedded within representative claims, especially within the key arena of parliamentary debates. Reingold and Swers advocate such an approach, arguing that a focus on deliberation among legislators will deepen our understanding of how issues—and the range of acceptable policy solutions—are defined, and how these are shaped by legislators' identities and ideologies (2011: 432–433). Yet there is a paucity of research illuminating how the traits of MPs shape the content of representative claims made on behalf of women.

This article helps to fill this gap in knowledge, testing new empirical data using a framework that incorporates many of the recent theoretical advances in the field. I address three key questions: *Who* is making claims on behalf of women? *What* are claims about women saying? *Which* women are represented by the claims? These questions are not considered in isolation from each other; rather, it is the interplay between them that helps us to understand the complex relationship between descriptive and substantive representation.

To address these questions, I provide an explorative analysis of parliamentary debates in France over a twenty-year period (2002–2022). This approach captures changes to the composition of parliament (and hence to levels of descriptive representation and partisan balance) over time. France affords an ideal case study for this research. Following the introduction of parity legislation in 2000, women's numbers have risen steadily from 12% (2002–2007) to 18% (2007–2012), 27% (2012–2017), and 39% (2017–2022). Other forms of diversity have been slow to follow; parliament remains dominated by those from privileged socio-economic groups, and ethnic diversity remained extremely low until 2017, when there was a modest influx of racially minoritized MPs. Consequently, some

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women have been represented *in absentia.* France's fluctuating party system has resulted in governments led from the right (2002–2012), left (2012–2017), and center (2017–2022). France has a "talking" parliament, with lengthy, performative debates that are ideal for studying representative claims (Alke et al. 2021). The French principle of universalism and its corresponding hostility to identity politics also makes France an interesting case study to contrast with existing studies of claims-making (Severs et al. 2013: 447). Thus, France is perfectly situated for a longitudinal analysis looking at how the gender, party, and ethnicity of MPs shape the claims made on behalf of women.

This article makes several distinctive contributions. It offers new empirical evidence of the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. It uses qualitative methods to provide rich, in-depth insights into representative claims. The analysis draws on and contributes to theoretical debates about SRW, illuminating the complexity and contestation within SRW. The findings reveal that most SRW comes from parties of the left, and from women, while most resistance to SRW comes from parties of the right, and from men. But hidden beneath this headline finding are many important nuances. A growing number of claims-makers for women are men. Some right-wing women cross party lines to defend SRW. Many claims are competing and contested; actors with opposing viewpoints both claim to be speaking on behalf of women. SRW is embedded within political contexts, and the same individuals support some forms of SRW and not others. Claims about minoritized women, often made in their absence, are sometimes imbued with harmful racial and gender stereotypes. Perhaps most crucially, the study reveals that SRW is most readily accepted when it is nested within the existing gender order, and is most likely to be resisted when it challenges patriarchy.

In the remainder of this article, I examine the theoretical developments in the study of SRW and representative claims. I outline my framework in more depth and introduce the data and methods used in the article. I then provide an in-depth analysis of parliamentary debates for eight pieces of legislation (two from each of four parliamentary terms), looking at the relationships between who is making claims, what the claims say, and which women are represented. I conclude that much of the "SRW" present in the analysis, even when beneficial to women, does little to challenge deeply entrenched gendered and racialized hierarchies.

Substantive Representation and Representative Claims

Studying SRW presents many challenges, central to which is the contested nature of SRW itself. Early definitions of SRW had an objectivist ontology and assumed the *a priori* existence of "women's interests" that could be defined and measured. However, attempts to define "women's interests" presented numerous problems, including the difficulty of identifying universal interests that took adequate account of the heterogeneity of women without resorting to essentialism. Definitions of "women's interests" were often based on the most privileged women (white, heterosexual, affluent) and overlooked the very different needs and perspectives of other women (Crenshaw 1989; Smooth 2011). Feminist scholars have also used their own normative positionings to

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judge what is in the best interests of women, leading to debates about the role of ideology within SRW.

More recently, a constructivist turn in the debate has led to a shift away from asking what "women's interests" *are*, and instead analyzing representative claims made by, about, and on behalf of women. This approach recognizes the role of non-parliamentary actors and also illuminates how women's interests, and indeed women themselves, are constituted by political actors. However, this approach has also faced criticism and scholars have proposed numerous refinements to avoid what Celis and Childs (2018) term an "anything goes" approach to representation.

Here, I summarize four main themes emerging from scholarship on SRW: the difficulty of defining "women's interests"; the study of representative claims; the challenges of incorporating different ideological perspectives into group representation; and the need for an approach that is inclusive and intersectional. I then bring these themes together into a framework that looks at *who* is making claims on behalf of women; *what* the claims about women are saying; and *which* women are represented by the claims.

A "Critical Perspectives" section of *Politics & Gender* that sought to untangle the "meaning and measurement of women's interests" demonstrated the complexity of studying SRW. Recognizing in-group differences among women, Weldon (2011) rejected the notion of shared interests, instead emphasizing "perspectives" rooted in lived experience. Smooth (2011) also emphasized differences between women and called for a more intersectional approach to the study of SRW—something explored further below. Reingold and Swers (2011) proposed a more endogenous approach that looks at deliberation within the representative process to see how lawmakers define women's issues. This approach takes greater account of how the identities, ideologies, and personal experiences of legislators can influence the outputs of representation.

The endogenous approach comes closer to a more constructivist approach to representation, and numerous scholars have explored a shift towards analyzing representative claims. Building on Saward's seminal work in this area (2006, 2010), feminist scholars have recognized the utility of exploring how "women's interests" are constructed both within and beyond the sphere of formal political representation by those making claims on behalf of women. The merits of this approach include looking at how both "women" and "gender" are constituted; Squires (2008) proposes studying the constitutive representation of gender (CRG), arguing that SRW focuses on how women are represented as a group whereas CRG focuses on how gender relations are constituted within the representative process. Harder (2023) also proposes a shift away from binary group representation ("women's interests") and argues instead for a focus on the representation of "gender equality interests." Siow (2023b: 538), recognizing that substantive representation is multifaceted, suggests "shifting focus from individual representatives towards the collective work of institutions."

Celis et al suggest a close reading of representative claims that considers how "women's interests" are framed. Importantly, they emphasize the normative views about women embedded within these claims, including the key question of whether the claims advance or hinder gender equality (2014: 160). Their comparative study

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found that four images emerge of "who and what 'women' are and should be," namely "victims, agents, mothers, and workers" (2014: 168). Severs et al. (2013), looking at Belgian headscarf debates, also identified the use of "agents" and "victims" as representations of Muslim women, with Green and social-democratic parties emphasizing the former while liberal, nationalist, and right-wing parties only emphasized the latter. These studies illustrate how ideologically informed views about gender can shape representative claims that empower or diminish women, reinforcing the connection between *who* makes claims and *what* is claimed on behalf of women.

The complex role of ideology within SRW led Celis and Childs (2012) to ask, "what to do with conservative claims?" If politicians talk about women in a way that is gender-conscious but not feminist, does this count as SRW? Empirical studies of "conservative feminism" revealed that, while there are genuine instances of feminist representation of women by right-wing politicians, there are also numerous occasions when right-wing ideology has resulted in representations of women that are damaging to gender equality (Celis and Childs 2014; Schreiber 2018). Erzeel and Celis caution that "left-wing and right-wing parties do not differ so much in how often they raise women's concerns, but *especially* in how they frame their representative claims" (2016: 584, original emphasis). An emphasis on framing reiterates the need for in-depth qualitative research that captures not only the instances but also the meaning and sincerity of SRW. Drawing on Squires' notion of CRG, claims about women may constitute gender relations in ways that challenge or reinforce the existing gender order.

Celis and Childs (2018) propose three conditions for assessing whether conservative claims qualify as SRW, based on whether they are congruent with the preferences of conservative women voters; are designed to effect meaningful change rather than window-dressing; and are ideologically coherent and consistent with other claims made by the same representatives. The authors further propose a shift in emphasis towards the *process* of representation, arguing that the best way to determine whether "good" substantive representation is taking place is to measure whether the process is *responsive* to women, *inclusive* of all women in the deliberative stages, and *egalitarian* in giving all women's views equal consideration.

Alongside ideology, a key concern for SRW is *which* women are being talked about, and how. Saward notes that representatives may portray or frame constituents "in particular, contestable ways" (2006: 301–302). This can result in frames that exclude certain groups of women. Saward recognizes this risk, arguing that representative claims can silence the voices of the groups being evoked and even become "privileged weapons in the hands of elite minorities" (2006: 304). Smooth cautions against framing women as a generic group, arguing that doing so "can result in a failure to represent subpopulations of women who are often the least empowered and most vulnerable segments of already politically marginalized groups" (2011: 438). Mügge et al. (2019) and Siow (2023a, 2023b) concur, arguing for the necessity of an intersectional approach to studying SRW. Celis et al advise that an analysis of representative claims should determine whether women are presented as "a monolithic or differentiated group" (2014: 160).

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Even when claims are made about minoritized women, they are not necessarily inclusive. Severs demonstrates that right-wing parties are less responsive to the claims of Muslim women, who are better represented by descriptive representatives (2010; Severs et al. 2013). Saward notes that claims are made for an audience; while he anticipates that the intended audience will be the object of the claims, this is not necessarily the case. Sometimes political parties will talk *to* an audience *about* another social group. For example, nationalist parties might talk *about* racially minoritized groups, but the audience that they are talking *to* is xenophobic voters. This makes it harder for the objects of the claims to "read back" the nature of the claim if they disagree with how they have been constituted. The legitimacy of the legislative process requires congruence between the claims made on behalf of a constituency and the preferences of that constituency, leading to acceptance of the claims by those constituted by them (Severs 2010); Siow argues that "both descriptive representatives within the chamber and responsiveness to descriptive representatives beyond the chamber are necessary for this to take place" (2023b: 537). Siow further argues that "good substantive representation entails not just speaking *about*, but also speaking *on behalf of*," in a way that is responsive to constituents (2023a: 331, original emphasis). Failure to do so can lead to claims about a group that constitute that group in negative and damaging ways.

Analyzing Representative Claims in Parliamentary Debates

My framework for analyzing representative claims within the specific context of parliamentary debates brings together some of the key insights from the literature discussed above. I examine these insights within three overarching questions: Who makes claims on behalf of women? What are claims about women saying? Which women are represented by the claims? The goal of the analysis is to deepen our understanding of each dimension and also the relationships between them.

The question of *who* makes claims for women is central to an analysis of SRW. The intersection of gender with other traits is an important part of the puzzle; the main focus here is on *partisanship*, *sex*, and *ethnicity*.[1] Partisanship is related to —but distinct from—ideology, which can vary between legislators within the same party, especially within larger parties. Parties of the left are associated with better representation of women (Kittilson 2006; O'Brien 2018), and women are associated with more left-leaning policies within their own parties (Greene and O'Brien 2016). However, the growing representation by and for women within right-wing parties leads Murray and Sénac to note that "left-wing women do not have a monopoly on [SRW]" (2014: 246).

Gender and politics scholars have also long debated the importance of descriptive representation. Sobolewska et al. (2018) note that empirical research generally supports a link between descriptive and substantive representation. However, the relationship between who representatives are and what they do is neither perfect nor straightforward. Childs and Krook (2009) caution that we should not elide female bodies with feminist minds, and Celis et al. (2008) argue

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that an analysis of SRW should focus on "critical actors." These actors are individuals who are more highly mobilized on the issue of SRW; not all women will be critical actors, and not all critical actors will be women. This opens up the possibility for non-descriptive representatives to engage with SRW. Celis and Erzeel (2015) find that men and representatives from right-wing parties make up a considerable proportion of the critical actors who engage in SRW, although they note that right-wing men are less likely to be feminists, underlining the importance of considering gender, partisanship, and the content of claims in tandem. Höhmann finds that men engage less in SRW as women's numbers rise, although he argues that this is not a backlash effect against women so much as a "specialization" effect whereby men defer to women on issues related to SRW (Höhmann 2020). Kroeber (2023) extends this thesis, finding that men will engage in SRW but mainly on policy areas that lie within their own comfort zone.

A handful of studies also look explicitly at the intersection of sex and ethnicity within parliamentary representation. These studies indicate that women of color bring distinctive perspectives and (sometimes) act as critical actors for racially minoritized women (Brown 2014; Orey et al. 2006; Siow 2023a). Minta and Brown (2014) find that minoritized men and white women can help advance the interests of minoritized women when the latter are not adequately represented descriptively, whereas Mügge et al. (2019) find that minoritized women representatives are much more likely than others to be critical actors for minoritized women. As Brown et al argue, "[race and gender] work in tandem leading to experiences distinct from men who are co-ethnics and white women," and "research designs that continue to treat race as independent from gender will continue to make inferences that lack precision, or worse, come to erroneous conclusions" (2022: 259).

Collectively, existing studies demonstrate that SRW can emerge from a range of critical actors, but a careful reading of the claims made by these actors is essential to determine whether they are advancing or in fact hindering gender equality. Hence, the second dimension of the framework focuses on *what* the claims about women are saying. Following a constructivist ontology, I consider how women are constituted by representative claims. Saward notes that "at the heart of representing is the depicting of a constituency *as* this or that, as requiring this or that, as having this or that set of interests" (2006: 301; original emphasis). Claims made about women could be empowering, emphasizing women's agency and identifying their interests in ways congruent with feminist demands for gender equality. Alternatively, claims could constitute women in ways that reinforce paternalist and stereotypical conceptions of women and their place within society. These latter claims may be linked to policy proposals that benefit women (such as protections against violence) and may ostensibly qualify as SRW based on the criteria proposed by Celis and Childs (2012)[2]; the nuance lies in the CRG—"the constitution of gender relations themselves"—in ways that are not empowering for women (Squires 2008: 188). A gendered economy of claims will feature both competition and contestation as claims-makers perform their claims to represent women as a constituency (Saward 2006). If we contend that ideology and identity both shape claims, that intersectionality matters, and that conservative and non-feminist claims might still

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qualify as SRW, then we can expect contestations between competing understandings of SRW. Beyond these contestations, we may also see conscious resistance to SRW (Josefsson 2024), expressed through rejecting representative claims made on behalf of women rather than offering alternative claims. I label these instances of resistance "ASRW" (anti-SRW).

Any consideration of how women are constituted as a group must also consider the third dimension of the framework, namely *which* women are included in the claim. Murray (2025) distinguishes between claims that are inclusive, generic, or narrow. Inclusive claims recognize within-group differences and adopt an intersectional approach. Generic claims constitute a group as homogenous; in practice, this often means treating the interests of the most privileged members of a group as those of the entire group (Smooth 2011). Narrow claims are ones that focus specifically on a sub-group; for example, debates about headscarves focus primarily on Muslim women. Celis and Childs (2018, 2020) and Siow (2023a) emphasize the importance of inclusion *and* responsiveness for "good" representation. Generic claims tend to exclude minoritized groups, while narrow claims might emphasize the needs of a sub-group that would otherwise go overlooked, but if these claims are not responsive to the preferences of that group, they might reinforce the stigmatization or marginalization of that group (Siow 2023b).

Data and Methods

This study analyzes debates within the French parliament over a twenty-year period (2002–2022). I selected eight bills (two from each of the four parliaments) using multiple criteria for my case selection. I sought cases that enabled comparability between the different parliamentary terms whilst also enabling internal variation between the debates and capturing different dimensions of SRW. I first narrowed my selection of cases to bills being debated around the midpoint of each legislative term. The rationale was to allow newly elected MPs enough time to gain some experience, while avoiding the build-up to the next election. Celis et al note that "the middle year of a legislature can be one of the most active in terms of bills being proposed and passed" (2014: 162). For the 2012–2017 parliament, the flagship bill on gender equality took place in the second year of the parliament but was included given its intrinsic interest. For the 2017–2022 parliament, I used a cut-off point of January 2020 to avoid the impact of COVID on debates held after this time.

I then selected two distinct bills following specific criteria. The first bill should be on a topic that was overtly and directly gendered, with an explicit focus on SRW. The second should be on a topic where SRW was not the explicit focus of the debate but where there might nonetheless be tangible gendered repercussions for women. To ensure comparability and feasibility, I tried to select debates of manageable and similar length. The debates selected were the ones that best met all these criteria, irrespective of whether they originated from the government or from backbenchers. Debates are lengthy and span multiple sessions within parliament; the total number of words analyzed qualitatively across the eight bills was 841,456. Table 1 summarizes the debates selected.

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Table 1. Summary of bills analyzed

Legislature		Bill 1	Bill 2
2002–2007	Topic	Gender pay gap	New equalities commission
	Date	Apr–May 2005	Oct 2004
2007–2012	Topic	Burqa ban	School truancy
	Date	Jun–Jul 2010	Jun 2010
2012–2017	Topic	Gender equality	Asylum reforms
	Date	Dec 2013–Jan 2014	Nov–Dec 2014
2017–2022	Topic	Domestic violence*	Online hate-speech*
	Date	Oct 2019	Jun–Jul 2019

*Private members' bill

French bills are usually sponsored by a government minister (except for Private Members' Bills (PMB) which are sponsored by backbench MPs and may or may not receive government support). Bills are initially debated in the relevant standing committee, which nominates a "rapporteur" to lead on the legislation (this is the bill's sponsor in the case of PMBs). After being amended in committee, bills are then debated and voted upon in a plenary session of parliament. My analysis uses data for the first reading in both committee and plenary, which is where the main claims are made.[3]

All data was analyzed by the author using NVivo software. I conducted thematic analysis following the approach outlined by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). All text was coded to its speaker to identify *who* is making claims. To identify *what* the claims are saying, an initial template of codes included the parent codes "SRW" and "ASRW." All claims ostensibly benefiting women, irrespective of their ideological positioning, were coded as SRW. Explicit acts of resistance to SRW were coded as ASRW. The code-frame was then developed inductively using a data-driven approach (Boyatzis 1998). For SRW, a distinction emerged between direct (where SRW was the explicit intention) and indirect (where the discourse benefited women without this being the primary goal). For ASRW, a distinction emerged between dismissive (refusal to recognize the problem) and obstructive (rejecting the proposed solution). Extensive notes and, where appropriate, additional thematic codes were used to assist in the qualitative analysis of each debate, drawing deductively from the literature and inductively from the data to note how women, gender, and ethnicity were constituted. To help identify *which* women were included in claims, claims acknowledging intersectional differences among women were coded under the child code "inclusive SRW." While this code helped identify which individual claim-makers made inclusive claims, I also noted the overall tendency within each debate to constitute women in ways that were inclusive, generic, or narrow, following Siow's (2023b) suggestion to look at legislators' work at the collective as well as individual level.

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Each instance of SRW or ASRW was coded separately, with multiple codes possible within a single speech. The totals for SRW and ASRW are the aggregate for all data coded to a child code or directly to the parent code. While coding categories were not always mutually exclusive, each section of text is only counted once in the aggregate totals. The quantitative dimension of the analysis (looking at the distribution of key codes among different categories of legislators) illuminates the relationship between who makes claims and what is said, focusing on the intersection of sex and partisanship. The qualitative analysis pays greater attention to the subtleties and nuance of the content, including ideological differences and CRG.

In-Depth Analysis of Parliamentary Debates

First Parliament (2002–2007)

Bill 1 was a (right-wing) government bill proposing to eradicate the gender pay gap within five years, led by Nicole Ameline, Minister for Parity and Professional Equality, a self-avowed feminist who was acknowledged by all parties throughout the debate as a critical actor for women. Women across different parties worked together to co-sponsor amendments, and there was abundant praise and appreciation by women for women in other parties. However, there was little engagement from men; one MP commented on the near-exclusive presence of women in the chamber, despite women comprising only 12% of MPs. Another session was marked by the virtual absence of right-wing MPs, only two of whom participated despite comprising 400 (out of 577) MPs. SRW clearly did not interest the right-wing male majority.

There were partisan differences in the claims made and the ways that women were constituted within those claims. The left framed their contributions in terms of gender equality and social justice, while claims by the right focused on boosting economic efficiency through maximizing women's contributions to the economy. The (male) rapporteur claimed that "just as important [as social justice] is the economic dimension," arguing that the workforce needed more women workers to replace employees headed for retirement. This claim, which constituted women as workers, was reiterated by other right-wing men to help persuade those unconcerned with SRW to support the legislation. The claim was challenged by a left-wing woman who argued that "it is disappointing that it was not until you noticed that the economy needs women that you decided to address the injustices they face." Left-wing MPs also argued that the government's claims for women were largely performative, without sufficient measures to ensure that the stated goals were met (thus falling short on Celis and Childs' second condition for qualifying as SRW [2018]).

MPs on the left repeatedly raised the issue of part-time work being imposed on women by employers (rather than being women's preference), leaving women underpaid, working difficult hours, and in a precarious position. The intersection here of gender and class, which was of little interest to the right-wing majority, was the only form of inclusive SRW in this debate; there was no consideration of how gender pay gaps might be particularly acute for multiply

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minoritized women. Rather, claims about women were mostly generic. There were a few instances of ASRW, including a disparaging joke made by the male committee chair when discussing women's careers.

Bill 2 was a government bill to create a High Authority to Tackle Discrimination and Promote Equality; the minister and rapporteur were both right-wing men. As some legal protections already existed regarding sexism, the law focused primarily on addressing racism and homophobia, making this bill a less direct source of SRW than Bill 1. Gender did not feature prominently in the debate—there were multiple occasions when people referred to different forms of discrimination (race, religion, sexuality) while omitting or briefly skipping over gender. However, a few critical actors introduced SRW into the debate; for example, a female left-wing MP directly discussed workplace discrimination against women while also being more inclusive than most other MPs in her recognition of other marginalized groups, including people of color, disabled people, and trans people. Ironically, given the topic of the legislation, the rapporteur engaged in several incidences of racism and sexism towards other MPs. In another instance of ASRW, a right-wing man responded with a facetious, dismissive quip to a left-wing woman speaking of her personal experience of sexist discrimination.

Overall, most claims in the first parliament were modest in advancing SRW and constituted women as a generic group. Regarding who made claims (Table 2), nearly all ASRW came from right-wing MPs, and none came from left-wing women. Women contributed three-quarters of SRW, while the right-wing male majority contributed very little. For direct SRW, there was a clear gender gap, while for inclusive SRW there was a clear partisan gap.

Second Parliament (2007–2012)

Bill 1 was a (right-wing) government bill led by a female minister and male rapporteur. It was officially a bill banning face coverings in public, with the government emphasizing its neutrality and broad reach. However, it was to all

Table 2. ASRW and SRW, by gender and party, 2002–2007 parliament

	Right-wing men (362)	Left-wing men (150)	Right-wing women (44)	Left-wing women (30)
ASRW (all)	15 (78.95%)	1 (5.26%)	3 (15.79%)	0%
- Dismissive	6 (60%)	1 (10%)	3 (30%)	0%
- Obstructive	8 (100%)	0%	0%	0%
SRW (all)	5 (4.5%)	23 (20.72%)	23 (20.72%)	60 (54.05%)
- Direct	2 (2.44%)	13 (15.85%)	18 (21.95%)	49 (59.76%)
- Indirect	2 (9.09%)	7 (31.82%)	5 (22.73%)	8 (36.36%)
- Inclusive	0%	3 (42.86%)	0%	4 (57.14%)

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intents and purposes a bill to ban burqas. Despite the initial generic claims, nearly all the claims made in the debate were narrow, focusing on a very small subgroup of women. There was broad consensus that wearing a burqa was wrong; the debate focused on why/how it was wrong, who was responsible for the decision, and the correct action to take. There was wider agreement that anyone forcing someone else to wear a burqa should be penalized, but less agreement on whether women wearing a burqa should themselves be punished for doing so.

Muslim women were talked about and constituted continuously throughout the debate, but their voices were not actually heard; there were no Muslim women MPs in that parliament, and groups representing Muslim women were rarely consulted by those speaking on their behalf. For example, a right-wing man claimed to have consulted all the relevant stakeholders on this issue, including academics, lawyers, and local politicians—but he omitted the actual people affected by the legislation. Another right-wing man claimed to have personal experience in this area, by which he meant that he had witnessed women wearing burqas in his constituency, which he saw as legitimizing his attempts to *speak for* women wearing burqas and constitute their needs and preferences. The debate was often framed in abstract terms, focusing on Republican values rather than real people and personal examples, reflecting the priorities and (lack of) knowledge of MPs. Muslim women activists were sometimes cited, but only when their arguments (against burqas) aligned with the viewpoints of those citing them. This is consistent with other instances of making Muslim women's inclusion in French politics conditional on their willingness to promote an assimilationist view of the French Republic (Murray 2016). While some Muslim women saw this ban as liberating, others saw it as repressive and contested the legislation once it was passed. In the absence of descriptive representation, claims about Muslim women failed to capture the diversity of their perspectives, resulting in insufficient responsiveness to this group.

Although no voice was given to women who wear burqas, a couple of MPs ascribed agency to these women and sought to understand their perspectives; one was George Pau-Langevin, at the time the only black MP representing mainland France,[4] who spoke of the alienation experienced by racially minoritized communities and the need to work with women in burqas rather than against them ("these women want the Republic to like them and accept them... you won't persuade them of this by voting for this law"). Another was a left-wing man who noted the lack of voice and agency accorded to women wearing burqas and regretted that they were not consulted as part of the legislative process.

All participants were of the view that burqas were an affront to women's rights and hence that banning them was an act of SRW. However, the claims made were narrow, paternalist, and frequently racist. Some of the most problematic claims instrumentalized women's rights to legitimize racist and Islamophobic viewpoints—part of a growing phenomenon in France and elsewhere described by Farris as "femonationalism" (2017; Celis et al. 2014). Rather than *speaking for* women in burqas, some MPs were *speaking about* them to a different audience.

Despite repeated attempts to downplay the racist nature of the debate (by emphasizing that the legislation targeted all face coverings and not just

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burqas, highlighting widespread opposition to burqas within Muslim communities, and insisting that the legislation was not targeting the wider Muslim community), there were numerous examples of discourses that played directly into racial prejudices. Examples included how people felt "afraid" or "threatened" when encountering someone whose face was covered; the difficulty of enforcing the law "at certain times of day and in certain locations"; and the risk of children being kidnapped if the mother's identity could not be confirmed. The most egregious examples juxtaposed the civility and enlightenment of French culture against the "barbarians"; one (centrist) male MP claimed that "when the [French] Republic is provoked, shocked, repulsed, it has the right to defend itself." Another (left-wing) man referred to burqas as the "victory of barbarianism over civilization." Burqas were linked to fundamentalism, fanaticism, brainwashing, primitive cultures, radicalization, and even tyranny, all seen as threats to the French way of life. These themes were directly linked to SRW through the gendered and racialized stereotypes of Muslim men as threatening and controlling, and women wearing burqas as helpless (and hapless) victims in need of a "white savior" to enlighten them and/or liberate them from their plight. One (right-wing) man claimed that Muslim communities had begged him for help: "We have come to you, they say, to try and free ourselves from the intolerable institution that is the burqa... If you give in, what are we going to do? We will not be able to preserve our dignity in the face of fundamentalists. You are our only defense, you, the National Assembly!". White women also saw themselves as saviors; for example, one (right-wing) woman claimed that "these women...must be liberated, even if they claim to be consenting [to wearing burqas]. As Simone de Beauvoir pointed out, 'the consent of victims doesn't legitimize anything,' because... it is the perverse result of brainwashing!".

While the "agents" frame found by Severs et al. (2013) and Celis et al. (2014) was conspicuously absent in this debate, the "victims" frame was omnipresent, and used by both sexes across the political spectrum. Punishing the wearing of a burqa was seen as a necessary step towards women's emancipation, with an emphasis on "re-educating" women—a frame that constituted women as passive recipients of an ideological battle between French civilization and primitive barbarianism. The tone was paternalist and frequently patronizing; for example, one (left-wing) man asked, "would it not be possible to mobilize a few hundred social mediators, young people doing their civic duty, for example, to go to these women wearing burqas to explain to them the Republican traditions?". While male control over female victims was a dominant trope, re-education was targeted primarily at women, with men targeted for punishment (through financial sanctions) rather than moral lectures.

Counter-narratives were relatively scarce. Some left-wing MPs linked the racist undertones of the debate to a recent debate on immigration which had used similar tropes, and argued that the debate was being instrumentalized to heighten racial tensions rather than to help a very small group of women affected by this issue. Pau-Langevin was one of the main voices to highlight the instrumentalization of SRW for racist purposes: "entirely pertinent discourses on defending secularism or women can conceal various prejudices, and the tone of the debates has sometimes bordered on xenophobia."

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Overall, while this bill was perceived by nearly all MPs as advancing SRW, a qualitative analysis of contributions reveals that the kind of SRW being produced was frequently problematic, as it constituted minoritized women in ways that were disempowering and based on racial prejudices. The debate failed to meet all three of Celis and Childs' (2018) principles to ensure "good" SRW, as representatives were not responsive to Muslim women, did not include them in the debate, and did not give equal consideration to the views of those who wear burqas. Likewise, most of the SRW in this debate would not meet Siow's threshold of "good substantive representation" (2023: 331). My findings echo those of Celis et al (2014), who found that claims about burqas in Belgium framed ethnic minority women as a homogenous group and as victims in need of savior by the state. Severs et al., looking at debates on Muslim headscarves in Belgium, also found that "right-wing and liberal parties' claims served to exclude, delegitimize, and otherwise marginalize Muslim women's voices" (2013: 433) and that "left-wing parties and female ethnic minority representatives" were more responsive to Muslim women (ibid: 443).

In contrast to Bill 1, there was very little SRW in the debates on Bill 2, which looked at school truancy and proposed to cut state benefits for the parents of children who skipped school. Despite the obvious potential here for SRW, there was no mention anywhere in the debate of the gender of truants, even though they were often referred to in the generic masculine.[5] There were only a few references to the specific challenges faced by single parents (and even fewer acknowledging that these were usually single mothers) who might have particular difficulties getting rebellious teenagers to attend school and would also be hit hardest by the withdrawal of benefits. A few MPs (all left-wing, mainly men) considered single mothers working antisocial hours who struggled to combine hands-on parenting with the need to work, but SRW was largely absent from the debate, which was drawn on class rather than gender lines.

Table 3 considers the intersection of gender and partisanship across both debates. Right-wing men contributed far more SRW than in the previous parliament, although with the caveat that their contributions did not meet the threshold of "good" SRW. Right-wing MPs were responsible for the bulk of paternalist and racist claims. Although there was no explicit ASRW, many of

Table 3. ASRW and SRW, by gender and party, 2007–2012 parliament

	Right-wing men* (300)	Left-wing men (167)	Right-wing women (45)	Left-wing women (61)
ASRW (all)	0%	0%	0%	0%
SRW (all)	104 (37.95%)	69 (25.18%)	70 (25.55%)	31 (11.31%)
- Direct	7 (13.21%)	21 (39.62%)	16 (30.19%)	9 (16.98%)
- Indirect	0%	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0%
- Inclusive	1 (16.67%)	3 (50%)	0%	2 (33.33%)

*Includes centrist party MoDem.

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the claims presented as SRW offered damaging portrayals of the women they were purporting to help. Left-wing women were the group least likely to make harmful claims, and anti-racist and inclusive representations of women came predominantly from the left. Partisanship was a stronger determinant than gender, especially on the left, although right-wing women were far more likely than right-wing men to engage in direct SRW.

Overall, the debates demonstrated a lack of inclusivity, with the relative homogeneity of MPs reflected in debates that constituted women either in generic or very narrow ways, and a CRG built on sexist and racist stereotypes rather than granting women agency.

Third Parliament (2012–2017)

Bill 1 was the (left-wing) government's flagship gender equality bill, designed to promote greater gender equality in areas including political inclusion, childcare, bodily autonomy, protection against violence, workplace equality, and tackling gender stereotypes. As such, the entire bill directly comprises SRW. The minister was a Moroccan-born woman, with a male rapporteur. Many aspects of the bill garnered cross-party support and consensus, and the bill enjoyed firm support from numerous prominent critical actors on the right, including Nicole Ameline; the former president of parliament's Women's Rights Delegation; and the designated spokesperson for the right-wing UMP party, whose personal support for the bill often exceeded that of her co-partisans. There were three main sticking points for some right-wing MPs, relating to abortion rights, incentivizing men to take paternity leave, and teaching gender equality in schools.

Some right-wing MPs took particular umbrage with the decision to remove the condition of "distress" from the right to access an abortion. Much of the ASRW was resisting the easing of restrictions, with one right-wing man claiming, "the freedom that you're describing is the freedom of a mother to kill her child!" (another right-wing man concurred). This MP also defended the right of the father to block an abortion. Some MPs accused women of using abortion casually as a form of contraception.

Numerous MPs rejected measures to allocate some parental leave directly to men, arguing that doing so encroached on a family's right to determine for itself which parent should take parental leave. These MPs—all on the right, mainly women—argued that priority should instead be given to increasing external childcare options. As such, they claimed they were protecting women's right to choose the best childcare option for their family. Left-wing MPs countered that forcing men to engage in childcare was a necessary step to redressing gender gaps in care-giving, and leaving it to families to "choose" almost always resulted in prioritizing men in bread-winner roles and women in parental roles. This is a clear example of contested SRW; while the left-wing claims were arguably more feminist, the right-wing claims reflected the sincere views of some conservative women. This congruency, and the consistency of these views with other right-wing positions, meant that these claims met Celis and Childs's conditions for SRW (2018).

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The third area of contestation related to teaching gender equality in schools, which again provoked the ire of both men and women on the right. They rejected what they referred to disparagingly as "gender theory," namely the recognition of concepts such as gender stereotypes and patriarchy, all of which was perceived as woke nonsense by its opponents. Underpinning this resistance was the desire to reinforce a CRG based on gender binaries, heteronormativity and nuclear families; for example, one right-wing woman claimed, "if, for you, 'gender theory' is the grounds for denying that a child is born as a boy or a girl then I tell you – no!". As with the discussion of parental leave, some comments were homophobic, including hostile references to the recent legalization of gay marriage, which was opposed by many on the right. These narrow discourses were countered by some inclusive claims from MPs on the left that explicitly recognized LGBT families.

The discussion of reinforcing gender parity legislation faced resistance to measures that would have made a meaningful difference, rooted in concerns regarding constitutionality rather than ideological opposition. Of note here was the role of two key critical actors who defended the measures. One was a left-wing man, the other a right-wing woman who knew that these measures would hurt her own party and thus prioritized gender solidarity over partisanship. She was not the only right-wing woman to do so; on a separate matter, a co-partisan went against her party line "as a woman" to support measures to advance women's rights.[6] Other left-wing men also advanced SRW at various points throughout the debate, including the rapporteur. Conversely, significant amounts of ASRW in this debate came from right-wing women, including a handful of antagonists on the mainstream right, and Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, the sole MP elected for the far-right National Front in this parliament. A few actors, both on the left and right, resisted some measures while supporting others, and some feminist proposals were rejected outright (ASRW) while others were met with counter-claims (contested SRW). This debate thus features several interesting phenomena: the growing presence of men advancing SRW; the willingness of some right-wing women to cross party lines on feminist grounds; the open expression by other women (and men) in the same party of anti-feminist views; and the complexity of analyzing SRW, given that it can take contested forms and the same individuals can advance SRW on some matters while opposing it on others.

Bill 2 was a government bill on asylum. There was a clear partisan dynamic, with the left more focused on helping refugees while the right wanted to reduce the number of claimants and expedite the expulsion of those whose asylum claim had been rejected. While SRW was not the primary focus of the debate, it did feature prominently in places, thanks in part to various critical actors, including the rapporteure and a few other left-wing women. The minister acknowledged these efforts to bring SRW into the debate, claiming that "when you talk about asylum, you are talking about women's rights." Key instances of SRW included advocating for the right to asylum for women who faced gender-based violence, trafficking, or domestic violence from a male partner or relative upon whose asylum claim their residency depends. These claims were inclusive, recognizing the specific needs of certain groups of

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Table 4. ASRW and SRW, by gender and party, 2012–2017 parliament

	Right-wing* men (206)	Left-wing men (212)	Right-wing* women (30)	Left-wing women (123)
ASRW (all)	42 (53.16%)	3 (3.8%)	34 (43.04%)	0%
- Dismissive	12 (36.36%)	2 (6.06%)	19 (57.58%)	0%
- Obstructive	30 (65.22%)	1 (2.17%)	15 (32.61%)	0%
SRW (all)	6 (1.19%)	102 (20.16%)	47 (9.29%)	351 (69.37%)
- Inclusive	0%	2 (14.29%)	1 (7.14%)	11 (78.57%)

*Includes center-right, mainstream-right, and far-right parties.

women. Measures were also sought to ensure better representation of women on the relevant decision-making bodies. Some measures to benefit women were rejected by the rapporteure, again demonstrating that SRW is complex; each claim sits within a broader legislative and ideological context, and support for SRW is conditional rather than automatic, even among key claim-makers. Right-wing opposition to the legislation was based on anti-immigration rather than anti-feminist grounds; there were overtly populist, xenophobic, and racist tones to the claims coming from the right, from scare-mongering about the overwhelming numbers of immigrants, associating migrants with criminal activity, to claiming that "we need to teach Africa about birth control."

Table 4 shows the intersection of gender and partisanship across both debates. ASRW is strongly driven by partisanship rather than gender, with both men and women on the right contributing to ASRW, although women were more often dismissive of SRW while men were more actively obstructive. For SRW there is both a gender and partisan divide, with the substantial majority coming from left-wing women, and most of the remainder coming from left-wing men, although right-wing women contribute a great deal more than their male counterparts, who contribute almost no SRW in this parliament. The gap is most stark for inclusive SRW, which covered a range of angles, mostly related to the specific needs of immigrant women, but also covering sexual orientation, age, and disability, marking a more intersectional approach than witnessed in the previous two parliaments.

Fourth Parliament (2017–2022)

In a shift from previous parliaments, Emmanuel Macron's centrist party was in power from 2017 to 2022. Bill 1 was a PMB proposed by a right-wing man. The bill proposed greater protection for victims of domestic violence through measures including electronic bracelets that alert the police if an abuser violates a restraining order. The debate was exceptionally consensual—something remarked upon by participants. This reflects the topic, which is a valence issue

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garnering cross-party support; debates in previous parliaments relating to domestic violence also produced high levels of consensus.

The claims made in the debate consistently constituted women as victims of male violence and in need of protection. This framing was frequently paternalist, portraying women as helpless; for example, one right-wing man spoke repeatedly about women as victims, broken by their abusers, who required MPs to speak up on their behalf because they had no voice left of their own. Similarly, a left-wing man spoke of the need for the law to defend the "weak" against the "strong." Conversely, a centrist woman spoke of the need to work with women's organizations, thus affording at least some agency to women. While the desire to protect women from male violence was sincerely intended as SRW, most of the debate focused on simplistic accounts of female victimhood. Only a few claim-makers (all women, from the center and left) situated domestic violence within the broader context of societal gender inequality, and advocated for greater education about gender equality in schools as a preventative measure.

Women were constituted as a generic group within the debate. There was some recognition that domestic violence affects families across different class backgrounds, including more affluent households. There was no consideration of domestic violence within same-sex relationships, nor of the particular needs of people who are disabled and/or racially minoritized. Only one MP (left-wing woman) considered the specific needs of immigrant women experiencing domestic violence who risk losing their citizenship if they leave their husbands.

Hence, while this bill could be applauded as an example of cross-party consensus promoting SRW, the CRG within the debate reinforced existing gender norms, with a lack of recognition of patriarchy, intersectionality, or women's agency, and an emphasis on protecting helpless women. There were also some instances of ASRW, all from men, who objected to the rapid issuing of restraining orders and electronic bracelets on the grounds that such measures infringed upon civil liberties and the presumption of innocence. While the claims were framed in legal (rather than overtly anti-feminist) terms, their goal was to obstruct a measure designed to save the lives of women at high risk from violent partners.

Bill 2 was another PMB, introduced by Laetitia Avia, a female backbencher from the governing center party. The bill sought to censor online hate speech and oblige websites to evaluate and remove hate speech within 24 hours of being reported. The bill garnered support from most parties, with the main opposition coming from the far-left France Unbowed party (LFI), who feared the legislation would silence legitimate protest rather than protect vulnerable groups from abuse. The mainstream right initially supported the legislation, but growing concerns about freedom of speech ultimately led to much of the bill being quashed by the Constitutional Council.

While the debate made frequent reference to hate speech linked to racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and (to a lesser extent) transphobia, there was surprisingly little SRW or discussion of misogyny, rape threats, and other forms of abuse targeted specifically at women. These areas were partially

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covered by legislation from 2018, but there was little consideration of the intersection of gender with other protected characteristics. The few instances of inclusive SRW came from the key protagonist (Avia) and antagonist (Danièle Obono, lead spokesperson for LFI), both of whom were black women. It was notable that Avia and Obono had competing visions of how best to protect minoritized groups from online abuse. Obono advocated for safe spaces online where vulnerable groups could interact without fear of abuse. Avia rejected this vision, arguing that this led to segregation and that a better alternative was to rid mainstream social media of hate speech so that all online spaces were safe and open to minoritized groups. Both women were what Dovi (2002) terms "preferable" descriptive representatives, having themselves been the target of online abuse. Their diverging viewpoints, as with the differences in opinion among Muslim women regarding burqas, demonstrate the interplay between the politics of presence and the politics of ideas and illustrate the importance of diversity within representation (Phillips 1995). Claims for descriptive representation are sometimes rejected for being essentialist, when in fact it is precisely because not all members of a group think alike that it is necessary to ensure their representation in sufficient numbers to capture their diverse preferences.

When we consider the intersection of gender and partisanship (Table 5), we see a shift from previous parliaments. Right-wing men contributed far less ASRW and far more SRW than previously, although this is partly because one of the two bills was a consensual bill led by a right-wing man. There wasn't much ASRW, but what there was came entirely from men and from across the political spectrum. Centrist women contributed a lot more SRW than their male counterparts; the gender gap was much smaller on the left, although left-wing women's contributions were more likely to be direct. The starkest gap is for inclusive SRW, nearly all of which came in the hate-speech debate and was led by Obono and Avia. Overall, however, the claims made were less inclusive than in the previous parliament.

Table 5. ASRW and SRW, by gender and party, 2017–2022 parliament

	Centrist men (205)	Right-wing men (95)	Left-wing men (44)	Centrist women (165)	Right-wing women (31)	Left-wing women (25)
ASRW (all)	4 (44.44%)	2 (22.22%)	2 (22.22%)	0%	0%	0%
- Dismissive	0%	1 (100%)	0%	0%	0%	0%
- Obstructive	4 (50%)	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)	0%	0%	0%
SRW (all)	17 (7%)	86 (35.39%)	31 (12.76%)	52 (21.4%)	12 (4.94%)	37 (15.23%)
- Direct	11 (5.59%)	76 (38.58%)	26 (13.2%)	41 (20.81%)	8 (3.55%)	29 (14.72%)
- Indirect	6 (19.35%)	7 (22.58%)	4 (12.9%)	9 (29.03%)	3 (9.68%)	2 (6.46%)
- Inclusive	0%	0%	0%	1 (12.5%)	0%	7 (87.5%)

Percentages do not always add up to 100% as the data includes five independent MPs.

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Conclusion

This study considered the relationship between who is making claims on behalf of women, what type of claims are made, and which women are represented within the claims. When we take a deep dive into "what is going on in representation," several interesting findings emerge (Saward 2006: 298). Overall, we see that SRW comes more from women than men, and from parties of the left than the right. ASRW comes mainly from the right, and more often from men. However, the study also qualifies these headline findings and illustrates the complexities and nuances within the bigger picture.

We see ongoing evidence of right-wing women serving as feminist critical actors for women, working collaboratively with women from other parties and sometimes defying their own party to do so. There is also growing engagement with SRW from men, including a bill led by a right-wing man. But all representative claims need to be situated within their political context; actors who promoted some forms of SRW also obstructed other measures for political reasons. Some right-wing women in particular sat at the nexus between feminist principles and conservative ideology, between identity politics and partisanship.

We also see clearly how an economy of claims can lead to competing, and sometimes contested, visions of SRW. While some women worked across party lines to defend SRW, ideology played a large role in producing competing claims, even among MPs who shared descriptive traits. The final parliament saw two women of color from different parties offering fiercely contested visions even though both were sincerely promoting SRW.

Ideological differences were also grounded in CRG; SRW was much more likely to be supported when it was nested within the patriarchal status quo rather than challenging the existing gender order. This is evidenced in the four SRW debates, three of which were led by the right. The first (equal pay) was generic and performative, and criticized for being more talk than walk, even though it was led by an acknowledged feminist critical actor. The second (burqa ban) was paternalist, narrow, and femonationalist, but garnered broad support. The third (gender equality), led by the left, was by far the most empowering, inclusive, and transformative, but also the most contested. The fourth (domestic violence) was paternalist, generic, and also broadly supported. The left generally supported SRW from the right even when criticizing its limitations, seeing any SRW as better than none. Conversely, the right supported SRW only when it did not disturb the existing gender order, and were otherwise more likely to resist and contest SRW. The most consensual debates were those that constituted women as victims; the most rejected claims were those that empowered women and directly challenged patriarchy.

Overall, this explorative study suggests greater engagement with SRW from men in more recent parliaments. The growing presence of women in parliament, and the greater diversity among women in the most recent parliament, enabled a wider range of perspectives. However, most claims across the twenty-year period were generic, treating women as a homogenous group, with only limited recognition of intersectionality. Where claims did focus on minoritized groups, they were often narrow rather than inclusive, and based on harmful stereotypes

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aimed at stoking racial tensions rather than ameliorating the lives of the women concerned. More inclusive and intersectional claims came mainly from the left, and disproportionately (given their low numbers) from women of color.

This detailed analysis of parliamentary debates offers substantial new empirical data and makes several contributions to our understanding of SRW. It illuminates the interplay between who claim-makers are, which women they talk about, and what kind of claims they make. It demonstrates the contested nature of SRW and shows that, while some women cross party lines to support SRW, others offer competing visions of SRW on ideological grounds even when they share descriptive characteristics. For parliament to be responsive to a constituency, the diversity of views within that constituency must be represented by a diverse and inclusive parliament. This study also highlights the need to identify the CRG within representative claims; a core finding is that a lot of "SRW" is paternalist, and seeks to help women in ways that uphold rather than challenge existing gendered and racialized hierarchies. Future research should build on work by Squires (2008) and Harder (2023) regarding whether claims advance broader goals of gender equality.

While qualitative research offers depths of insight that cannot be achieved in more quantitative studies, one inevitable limitation is that the findings are influenced by the case selection and may not be generalizable to all debates held over the twenty-year time frame. Future research could look at additional debates for further comparative analysis or undertake quantitative analysis that offers breadth to complement the depth of this study. This article demonstrates that we still have much to learn about how SRW unfolds in practice.

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Notes

1. Social class was not included due to the low proportion of working-class deputies, the dominant role of partisanship in the representation of class interests, and the difficulties in measuring class accurately. Sexual orientation and gender identity were also not included due to the very low numbers of "out" legislators for the duration of this study.
2. "(1) directly *constructed* as being of importance to women; (2) *presented* as only affecting women; (3) *discussed* in terms of gender difference; (4) *spoken* of in terms of gendered effects; and/or (5) *framed* in terms of equality between women and men" (Celis and Childs 2012: 219).
3. The full transcripts of plenary debates are accessible via the French parliament website; full transcripts are also available for committee meetings from 2007 onward, but only summaries are available for the committee meetings from 2005 to 2007, with no data for meetings before 2005.
4. France also has overseas territories with representation in parliament; their MPs are usually native to that territory. Pau-Langevin originates from one of these territories (Guadeloupe) but was elected to represent a constituency in Paris, where she had long resided. She is not a Muslim.
5. In the French language, masculine pronouns are used to refer both to abstract individuals and to any mixed-sex group.
6. The need for right-wing feminists to go against the party line to defend SRW is a scenario foreseen by Celis and Childs (2012: 217).

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Rainbow Murray is a Professor of Politics at Queen Mary University of London: r.r.murray@qmul.ac.uk

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