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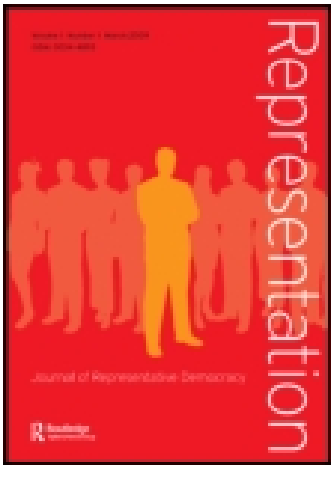

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THE CONSTITUTIVE REPRESENTATION OF GENDER: EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY RE-PRESENTATIONS OF GENDER RELATIONS[1]

Judith Squires

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This paper extends the focus of research on representation within the women and politics literature in two ways: firstly, by introducing the notion of 'the constitutive representation of gender' to complement the notion of the substantive representation of women, as a distinct facet of the representative process; and secondly, by extending the spheres of representative practices under consideration to include not only the parliamentary but also the extra-parliamentary arenas of women's policy agencies and feminist NGOs.

Introduction

Theories and practices of representation have been subject to intense scrutiny within the 'women and politics' literature, generating extensive research into the substantive representation of women by female parliamentarians. This paper extends the focus of this research in two ways: firstly, by introducing the notion of the constitutive representation of gender to complement the notion of the substantive representation of women as a distinct facet of the representative process; and secondly, by extending the spheres of representative practices under consideration to include not only the parliamentary but also the extra-parliamentary arenas of women's policy agencies and feminist non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The literature on the substantive representation of women within the parliamentary arena has largely explored *who* represents *what* (do female parliamentarians represent women's interests?), which focuses attention on the relation between the descriptive and substantive representation of women (see Celis et al. 2008, this issue). This paper aims, by contrast, to explore *how* and *where* representation occurs, focusing on the relation between the substantive representation of women and the constitutive representation of gender.

The paper suggests that analyses of the process of representation would be refined by supplementing the widespread interrogation of the substantive representation of women (SRW) with an interrogation of the constitutive representation of gender (CRG). SRW and CRG are archetypal categories, which are inevitably inter-twinned in practice, but it is nonetheless useful to distinguish between the two representative processes analytically. The suggestion is that while SRW captures one facet of the representative process, whereby representatives (usually assumed to be elected parliamentarians) aim to speak on behalf of female constituents by describing their preferences and consciously

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held interests, CRG captures another significant facet of representative process, whereby representatives (including unelected femocrats and gender experts) articulate these interests in ways that inevitably privilege particular conceptions of gender relations. The representative process therefore needs to be understood as both enabling and constraining, with all representative claims constituting gender relations in particular ways. The central issue it not *whether*, but *how* gender relations are constituted through representative claims making processes. The introduction of the notion of CRG is intended to highlight the extent to which the process of articulating interests entails a form of claims-making, which inevitably contributes to the constitution of gender relations themselves. It is deployed here to show the ways in which the particular articulations of gender relations deployed by women's policy agencies resonate with mainstream policy agendas, framing the problem of gender in ways that privilege particular policy solutions, which in turn privilege particular conceptions of gender.

The first section of the paper outlines the process of the 'constitutive representation of gender', as distinct from the substantive representation of women. The second considers the significance of the extra-parliamentary arena as the location for exploring the operation of both SRW and CRG, depicting women's policy agencies (WPAs) as important representative bodies. The third section reviews examples that indicate that WPAs are playing a constitutive role in representing gender relations, and the fourth section explores the ways in which these policy agencies might be viewed as engaging in this constitutive function.

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The Constitutive Representation of Gender

The notion of CRG draws both on developments in gender theory, which focus on gendered relations rather than sexed bodies and developments in theories of representation, which focus on the process of 'claims-making' as constitutive. The incorporation of CRG into the gender and politics lexicon creates conceptual space for the claim that female politicians and femocrats each engage in representative claims-making (Saward 2006b), constructing the group that they claim to represent and articulating their interests in ways that are both enabling and constraining (Bacchi 1999). For a summary of the features of SRW and CRG see table 1.

Explorations of the SRW tend to work with the category of 'women', notwithstanding a wealth of literature that has critically interrogated the concept, unsettling both its coherence

TABLE 1
Key features of the two modes of representation

Substantive Representation of Women	Constitutive Representation of Gender
Sex	Gender
Description	Constitution
Speaking for	Speaking about
Women's interests	Gender relations
Bottom-up	Top-down
Agenda-setting	Identity-shaping

and its centrality. The idea that 'women' are a coherent and discrete group with shared interests has been roundly criticised as endorsing an essentialist logic that entrenches rather than unsettles cultural stereotypes, too unitary to be sensitive to the contradictions and antagonisms within as well as between groups (Phillips 2007).

The tendency within some forms of 'difference feminism' to essentialise the category of woman, such that differences between women are obscured and a dominant (white, heterosexual, Western, able-bodied …) construction of femininity privileged, has been widely critiqued, generating a wealth of scholarship on 'gender' as a social construct as distinct from 'sex', a biological given, with an emphasis on the diverse forms of gendered identities leading to the notion of multiple femininities and a growing theoretical concern with the differences among women. Meanwhile, explorations of the differences amongst men similarly led to a notion of multiple masculinities, in which hegemonic masculinity is constructed in opposition to a range of subordinate masculinities (Connell 1987, 183–188; 1995). This recognition of the complexity of gendered identities frequently entails interrogation of the ways in which the construction of gender intersects with other identities (Crenshaw 1991) and focuses attention on the phenomenon of 'in-group essentialism' whereby a sub-set of a group seeks to fix the characteristics of a specific identity, marginalising those group members who differ in other aspects of their identity (Hancock 2005, 8).

While the focus on the multiplicity of gendered identities can leave the concept of sex largely un-interrogated, Butler's argument that many of these deployments of gender served to essentialise sex, which is socially constructed through routine gendered performances (Butler 1990), works to unsettle the binary logic of sex itself. Here sex becomes an effect of gender and the distinction between sex and gender collapses. Feminist theoretical scholarship, which created the category of gender in order to answer the question 'what is a woman?' in a non-deterministic manner, now questions the presumption that the sexed body can be conceived as 'the unproblematic biological and factual base upon which gender is inscribed', depicting the body as itself constructed 'by discourses and practices that take the body both as their target and as their vehicle of expression' (Gatens 1992, 132).

Although it is generally sensitive to women's heterogeneity, eschewing essentialism and acknowledging the multiplicity of gendered identities and interests (Young 1990; Phillips 1995; Mansbridge 1999), the SRW literature has tended to retain a concern with the representation of women as a group. This follows from the fact that, while concerned with the representation of women's shared experiences rather than their bodily commonality, the literature is largely concerned to explore the nature of the link between women's descriptive and substantive representation (see Childs 2004; Lovenduski 2005; Mateo Diaz 2005; Celis et al. 2007). It therefore seeks to document the presence of female bodies, measure the prevalence of women's policy concerns, and interrogate the thorny question of the relation between these two. Rather than exploring the ways in which feminine identities are constructed by political discourses, this literature generally focuses on the extent to which both female bodies and preferences are represented in democratic decision-making, evaluating the relative merits of various strategies designed to improve their presence and impact.

The object of concern for SRW scholars has been the representation of women's substantive interests, which focuses on the articulation of pre-existing gendered identities and policy preferences, rather than on their constitution. The key question

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here is: 'Do women in parliament represent women?', with the main object of analysis being 'how far female and male legislators represent the opinions of male and female voters' (Mateo Diaz 2005, 189). In framing the question in this manner, studies have inevitably focused on empirical studies of issue congruence as a way of measuring representativeness. The process by which interests are articulated, or opinions represented, is not generally foregrounded, notwithstanding a long-standing appreciation of the theoretical complexities entailed in trying to define 'women's interests' (Diamond and Hartsock 1998; Sapiro 1998). As a result, the idea that representative claims-making might constitute gender relations in particular ways has received relatively little attention to date. Explorations of the SRW have therefore traced a bottom-up representative process, starting with women and their interests (though not necessarily in an essentialist way), and seeking to establish the extent to which these interests are articulated and reflected by representatives. Explorations of the CRG would, by contrast, entail explorations of more top-down representative processes, starting with the claims-making of representatives, seeking to establish the ways in which identities are narrated by representative claims.

This approach is of course not entirely novel. It draws on existing feminist research, particularly that found in the recent literature on gender mainstreaming (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2000; Verloo 2001; Rai 2003; True 2003; Daly 2005; Squires 2005). Gender mainstreaming, perhaps best understood as a set of tools and processes which help to integrate a gender perspective into all policies at the planning stage, operates by requiring those involved in the policy process to consider the likely effects of policies on the respective situation of women and men, and revise proposed policies if necessary such that they promote gender equality rather than reproduce gender inequality. In this way gender mainstreaming questions the presumed neutrality of bureaucratic policymaking, highlighting the way in which apparently impartial policies might reproduce existing inequalities by failing to address their structural impact. The very strategy of gender mainstreaming therefore rests on the assumption that all policies constitute gender relations in particular ways, some more conducive of equality than others. It aims both to make policy-makers more conscious of this process, and to privilege those manifestations of policy-making that constitute gender relations in ways perceived (generally by gender equality experts) to be more rather than less equitable (Verloo 2001; Squires 2007). The gender mainstreaming literature is therefore premised on an understanding that policy-making entails the constitutive representation of gender. The proposal here is that this insight be extended more fully within the literature on representation itself.

Whilst an acknowledgement of the constitutive role of claims-making has yet to feature as prominently as a distinctive concern in the literature on representation, there are feminist political theorists who adopt something akin to this approach. Iris Young notably rejected understandings of representation that work within a 'logic of identity' whereby representatives are assumed to be present for their constituents and act as they would act, arguing that 'rather than a relation of identity or substitution, political representation should be thought of as a process involving a mediated relation of constituents to one another and to a representative' (Young 2000, 127). However, although this introduces an important emphasis on process, the process here flows from the constituents to the representative, rather than vice versa. Jane Mansbridge offers some additional useful theoretical resources in her recommendation that the traditional model of 'representation as promising' needs to be supplemented by a further model of

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'anticipatory' representation (Mansbridge 2003, 515). Representation by promising assumes a power relation between voter and representative that runs forward in linear fashion—the voter, 'statically conceived' tries to exercise power over the representatives as agent' (Mansbridge 2003, 516). In anticipatory representation, by contrast, the power relation works not forward, but backward, through anticipated reactions: the voter looks back to the past behaviour of a representative in deciding how to vote in the next election. This conception of representation is more deliberative because it requires communication between the represented and representative and depicts the represented as 'educable' by representatives, the media, opposition candidates and others who all seek to offer 'explanations' of the representative's votes. Legislators are here given a role as 'initiators and educators' (Mansbridge 2003, 525). This way of conceiving of representation requires that we shift our normative focus from the individual to the system, and from an aggregative focus on the way the legislator votes to a deliberative focus on the way the legislator communicates. The notion of anticipatory representation therefore turns our attention to communication, and the process of claims-making, introducing the idea that the representative process flows not only from the constituents to the representative, but also from the representative to the constituent. Here we find the idea that the 'represented' is malleable, open to being shaped by the representative process itself. However the communication is assumed to be deliberative: it takes the form of a rational exchange in which power relations are conceived as one-dimensional (Lukes 2005) and evenly balanced.

The proposed introduction of CRG would challenge these assumptions, opening up conceptual space to interrogate productive re-presentations of gender relations that are framed by complex networks of power relations. Adopting an approach that is perhaps closer to CRG, Eveline and Bacchi explore the ongoing gendering of policy and institutions, working with a notion of gender as an 'effortful social and political process', aiming to capture the ways in which gender differentiation is 'done' via institutional procedures (Eveline and Bacchi 2005, 501–502). Their aim is to explain the processes by which gendered identities are constituted via various representational practices, rather than to use these identities as the basis for representation.

On this approach representation is understood as a process, which entails the practice of making claims to be representative. Following Michael Saward, the representative claim is here held to be constitutive in that it constructs a constituency in whose interests the representative claims to speak: 'representatives construct portrayals or depictions of the represented, in order to be able to represent them' (Saward 2006a, 414). Here representation is a creative process, constituting rather than simply depicting what is seen. As Linda Alcoff notes: 'In both the practice of speaking for as well as the practice of speaking about others, I am engaging in the act of representing the other's needs, goals, situation, and in fact, who they are. I am representing them as such and such … I am participating in the construction of their subject-positions. This act of representation cannot be understood as founded on an act of discovery wherein I discover their true selves and then simply relate my discovery' (Alcoff 1991, 9). The suggestion is that representative processes need to be understood as entailing constitutive as well as reflective moments (Hall 1997).

To recognise this is not necessarily to depict representation as a problematic disciplinary practice. Such constitutive processes may equally entail constituting groups in ways that generate political energy and participation or in ways that generate political

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dependency and passivity. Underlying the concept of the CRG is a broadly Foucauldian notion that power is constitutive of that upon which it acts, and can be productive as well as repressive (Foucault 1978). Moreover, in suggesting that the concept of CRG supplements rather than replaces the concept of SRW, the intention is to avoid any implication that women are mere 'docile bodies' shaped by power (Fraser 1989; McNay 1992). Rather, the aim is to open up a theoretical space to acknowledge that representation should be understood as constitutive practice, and to highlight the extent to which the effects of these practices will be determined by particular networks of power. The point of articulating CRG as an analytical category in relation to the 'representation of women' is therefore to highlight the extent to which, when claiming to speak for women, representatives are actively engaged in making claims about women, participating in the construction of feminine subject-positions.

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Extra-parliamentary Representation

The location in which these representative practices take place also demands consideration. While much of the women and politics literature has focussed on the parliamentary arena, exploring the extent to which elected representatives accurately reflect the interests of voters, there is a growing recognition that we need to focus attention on alternative sites of political representation, recognising that 'constituents' and 'representatives' need not be members of electoral districts and elected parliamentarians respectively, and so looking 'more closely at the democratic status of non-electoral representation' (Saward 2006a, 415). It is therefore noteworthy that feminist political scientists are extending their analyses of representative practices beyond national legislatures, recognising that the use of gender machinery to increase the profile of women's issues and interests might be viewed as an alternative representation strategy. Building on this, it is important to recognise that when women's policy agencies claim to help the actors 'that speak for women and gender equality' to enter government policy-making arenas, and bring 'women's interests and gender equality issues into public policy discussion, formulation and implementation' (Mazur 2005, 3), they are making a representative claim. For a summary of the key features of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary representation see table 2.

Extra-parliamentary sites of representation for/of women include 'women's policy agencies', 'national machineries for the advancement of women', or the 'gender machinery' within state bureaucracies that deal with women's policy issues or gender equality. These agencies take many forms, including stand-alone government ministries,

TABLE 2
Key features of Parliamentary and Extra-Parliamentary sites of representation

Parliamentary	Extra-Parliamentary
Legislature	Women's Policy Agencies
Female Parliamentarians	Femocracts
Electoral authorisation and accountability	Executive authorisation and accountability
Substantive representation of female electorate	Substantive representation of women's movement

offices within the head of state's department, quasi-autonomous state agencies such as national commissions or divisions for gender equality within Ministries of Labour, Social Welfare or National Development, parliamentary commissions and delegations. The interest in the representative work of these agencies has increased since the 1975 UN International Women's Year conference in Mexico City recommended that governments establish agencies dedicated to promoting gender equality and improving the status and conditions of women, leading to the creation of 165 new state bureaucracies by 2004 (Squires 2007).

The growing significance of these extra-parliamentary institutions is framed by wider processes of state reconfiguration in which the formal powers and policy responsibilities of the state have been 'reshaped, relocated and rearticulated' (Banaszak et al. 2003, 4). This reconfiguration entails both the up-loading and down-loading associated with multilevel governance and the lateral-loading and off-loading entailed in the shift in power across states spheres, from elected bodies to the courts or executive agencies of government, and from state spheres to civil society organisations, including the market, family and community. These reconfiguration processes have been recognised in the 'state feminist' literature to be crucial for women's movements insofar as they provide both negative and positive opportunities that differ fundamentally from the state context that women's movements faced in the 1960s and early 1970s (Outshoorn and Kantola 2007).

Firstly, downloading state powers in the form of devolution has given some feminists opportunities for engaging in constitutional design, helping to shape new state structures in the making (Mackay et al. 2003; Mackay 2007), and augmenting the recent focus on the representative and administrative branches of the state with an increased interest in the constitutional (Waylen 2006). Secondly, uploading state powers to regional and international bodies has increased women's opportunities to use supra-state institutions to put pressure on the state to increase women's representation, encouraging the development of transnational NGO activism (Eschle 2001). Thirdly, off-loading state powers to civil society organisations, which leads to the use of 'partnerships' in policymaking and implementation, gives feminist NGOs new responsibilities and powers (Newman 2001; Larner 2005). In light of this state reconfiguration, and the new opportunities and challenges it creates, the women and politics literature has increasingly interrogated extra-parliamentary as well as parliamentary arenas as sites of representation. However, this literature has generally aimed to explore the extent to which the creation of gender machinery has facilitated women's substantive representation, overlooking the constitutive facet of their representative role.

For instance, the influential research network on gender politics and the state (RNGS) conducted systematic studies of the degree to which women's policy agencies bring more women, and the women's movement actors that speak for them, into the affairs of government (descriptive representation), and introduce feminist ideas into policy discussion and outcomes (substantive representation). Their research explored the extent to which women's policy agencies facilitate both women's descriptive and substantive representation, by helping the actors 'that speak for women and gender equality' to enter government policy-making arenas, and by bringing 'women's interests and gender equality issues into public policy discussion, formulation and implementation' (Mazur 2005, 3). The various studies conducted by this network (Stetson and Mazur 1995; Ousthoorn 2004; Lovenduski et al. 2005; Haussman and Sauer 2007) suggest that agencies

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can facilitate SRW where the women's movement is cohesive on the issue under consideration and the policy environment is receptive to women's movement demands.

These studies have established the extra-parliamentary as an important site for analysing SRW, complementing those parliamentary representative practices that had previously garnered more systematic attention. Indeed some scholars have suggested that these extra-parliamentary sites may actually be more effective arenas for the SRW than is the parliamentary. For instance, Weldon suggests that women's policy agencies are best placed to represent marginalised groups, because they can do so without assuming a false homogeneity of interest or identity and so can reflect group diversity more adequately than female parliamentarians (Weldon 2002, 1155). She claims that these policy agencies and women's movements in combination 'provide more effective avenues of expression for women' than do women in the legislature (Weldon 2002, 1153). This is so, she maintains, because gender quotas invoke a form of group representation in which individual legislators stand for their group, having opinions or behaviour that is favourable to women because of their shared experiences: it is their personal experiences that are argued to be the basis of their claim to be representative (Weldon 2002, 1154–1155). This mode of representation is therefore depicted as limited because of the weakness of the presumed link between the personal experience of the individual representatives and their knowledge of the group perspective (Weldon 2002, 1155). For Weldon, a group perspectives can only really be grasped via group interaction, and the interactive nature of a group perspective is more readily represented by women's policy agencies in consultation with women's movement organisations than by female legislators reflecting on their own personal experiences: notwithstanding their diversity 'women's movements are likely to come closer to articulating women's perspective than a disparate, unorganized group of women in the legislature' (Weldon 2002, 1161). The general upshot of her analysis is that women's policy agencies and women's movements together are more effective than large numbers of women in the legislature at securing policy action and realising SRW.

The work of these scholars establishes policy agencies as an important site for the representation of women. Nonetheless, they focus attention of the potential democratic resources that these bodies offer, viewing representation as a wholly positive phenomenon and concentrating on the ways in which these bodies represent the interests of women. There has been little attention to date on the ways in which women's policy agencies also *constitute* gender identities via their representational practices, generating both productive and disciplinary narratives of gender relations.

Extra-Parliamentary Constitutive Representation of Gender

Having established CRG as an important representative process and the extra-parliamentary as a significant site of representation, this section explores the ways in which extra-parliamentary representatives, or femocrats, engage in representative claims-making, constructing both the group that they claim to represent, and their interests. For a summary of authors using SRW and CRG to explore parliamentary and extra-parliamentary representation see table 3.

While not explicitly framed as explorations of the CRG in the extra-parliamentary arena, there is a body of literature which focuses on the ways in which the femocrats found in women's policy agencies come to be the privileged speakers for women's

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TABLE 3
Summary of authors using substantive representation of women (SRW) and constitutive representation of gender (CRG) to explore Parliamentary and Extra-Parliamentary representative practices

Process Location	SRW	CRG
Parliamentary	Childs 2004 Childs and Krook 2006 Celis et al. 2008 Lovenduski 2005 Mateo Diaz 2005 Phillips 1995 Wangnerud 2000	
Extra-parliamentary	Lovenduski et al. 2005 Outshoorn 2004 Stetson and Mazur 1995 Weldon 2002	Bacchi and Eveline 2004 Hobson et al. 2007 Mohammad 2005 Towns 2002

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interests, and considers the normative significance of the particular interests they privilege (see, for instance Hobson 2003). There are a growing number of case studies that indicate that the agencies benefit small female elites (Franceschet 2002), or focus on those issues that are compatible with the dominant state policies (Matear 1997; Waylen 2000). The role for CRG as an analytical tool here is to show how the agencies narrate gender in ways that are constitutive of particular gender-relations, which will facilitate the substantive representation of some women's interests more effectively than others. This is so because the process of representing women entails not only the reflection of interests, but also the constitution of a 'group' on behalf of which the agencies speak, portraying the represented in order to be able to represent them (Saward 2006b, 414).

Unsurprisingly, the particular portrayal of gender relations generated by many women's policy agencies tend to privilege those forms of gender identity that resonate most closely with dominant policy paradigms (Bedford 2006). For instance, Hobson notes that in Sweden the feminists to be given policymaking roles were those who did not decouple class equality from gender equality (Hobson 2003), given that here women's emancipation was cast as part of the labour movements' struggle for a just society (Palme 1972, 235–243). As a result, gender equality polices are nearly always presented as gender-neutral, rather than as a means of recognising gender distinctive claims (Hobson 2003). Significantly, immigrant women's groups were rendered invisible by this Swedish institutionalised feminism, which 'produced hegemonic representations of women's political identities' (Hobson et al. 2007), obscuring the experiences of immigrant and minority women (Mulanari 2001 cited in Hobson et al. 2007). The Swedish equality discourse that has been celebrated around the world as a model for empowering women politically and economically is thereby implicated in creating another inequality by entrenching a hierarchy between 'Swedes' and 'immigrants' (Towns 2002).

This tendency appears common amongst the Nordic countries, which have been regarded as model states in relation to gender equality, but which privilege a form of gender equality that is not well placed to deal with the challenge of multiculturalism. As Siim argues, the Nordic discourse of gender equality has increasingly become a means to legitimise discrimination and stigmatisation of ethnic minorities (Siim 2007). The Danish

gender discourse, and the state feminists who articulate it, have depicted young Muslim men as violent and young Muslim women as oppressed and victims of their 'culture', 'representing' Muslim women in ways that frequently compete with their own self-understanding of the conflicting demands of their religious and national cultures (Siim 2007, 498–504). Given that these Muslim women are under-represented in political parties, women's policy agencies and voluntary organisations, neither the Danish women's movement nor the Danish women's policy agencies give these particular women a voice. In so doing they not only fail to realise the substantive representation of these particular women, they also constitute these women in particular ways—ways that bring certain policy responses to the fore and sideline others.

Meanwhile, Latin American scholars note that women's policy agencies tend to represent women in ways that are consonant with neo-liberal policy commitments. SERNAM, the Chilean women's policy agency, has focused on women's civil and political rights rather than their socio-economic rights, notwithstanding the fact that the autonomous women's organisations advocate social welfare policies on the basis of women's difference (Franceschet and Macdonald 2004). As a result many of the autonomous women's organisations feel that the more institutionalised policy community is marginalising rather than representing their demands.

A similar tendency is documented in Robina Mohammad's account of the *Instituto de la Mujer*, the state department for women established in Spain in 1982. Mohammad argues that the *Instituto de la Mujer* used its location within the state to disseminate (and universalise) its vision of what counts as women's equality and how this might be achieved (Mohammad 2005, 248). The *Instituto* produces extensive materials informing and guiding women, which serve to 'produce a collective memory of women's history which acts as a basis for the formulation of gender equality programmes and provides legitimation for equality feminism' (Mohammad 2005, 251). In this way the Spanish agencies teach women the techniques by which they might become better workers, representing women's interests in a way that is simultaneously constitutive of new gendered identities. The sharp fall in Spain's birth rate, now the lowest in Europe, is—Mohammad suggests—a reflection of the increased availability of contraception and information, but 'also the lower social value placed on motherhood and mothering' (Mohammad 2005, 256). In this analysis Spanish state feminism is shown to offer a conceptualisation of gender equality that aims to make women equal to men by developing their opportunities and creating a 'model of Spanish womanhood capable of taking up these opportunities' (Mohammad 2005, 249). This process is both productive and disciplinary, allowing those capable of the necessary transformation to be brought to the fore, while relegating those who are not to the periphery.

Crucially, focusing on CRG as a facet of the representative process allows one to acknowledge the representative functions of WPAs, even though they frequently lack the formal accountability to women's movements that some scholars have deemed to be integral to the SRW. For, although some commentators depict WPAs as representative bodies, others have argued that 'it is muddled thinking' to expect women's policy agencies to be accountable to women's movements, for they are directly accountable, like all other bureaucratic units, to the elected government (Goetz 2005, 6). Notably, Goetz suggests that to hold policy agencies directly accountable to the women's movement is to expect women's policy agencies to perform a 'representative function even though the staff and leadership of these agencies are not directly elected' (Goetz 2005, 6). By contrast,

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this paper suggests that these agencies should be understood to have a representative function, notwithstanding their formal lack of accountability to the women's movement, and that they should be understood to have this representative function by virtue of their claims-making capacity. The fact that agencies have a representative function does not necessarily imply that they are also accountable to those that they claim to represent. As Pitkin recently pointed out, representation 'may have nothing at all to do with democracy' (Pitkin 2004, 337).

These examples of the ways in which policy agencies engage in representative practices that are clearly constitutive raise various issues, many of which have received relatively little attention in the literature on women's substantive representation. The introduction of CRG as a framing device highlights the need to explore processes of interest articulation, documenting the ways in which NGOs and WPAs in particular are involved in the articulation process via their claims-making role.

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Representative Bodies?

The previous section argued that femocrats engage in representative claims-making, constructing the group that they claim to represent. This section considers the way in which they do so, exploring the particular nature of claims-making that is currently being privileged by women's policy agencies and feminist NGOs. It interrogates the way in which the agencies and organisations frequently represent women's interests in ways that actively constitute those gendered identities that are compatible with government rationalities, and adopt forms of claims-making that rely on a particularly static and non-relational understanding of gender.

Paradoxically, women's policy agencies emerged to represent the voice of the women's movement within the state just as the women's movement was fragmenting into a series of diverse groups and loosely aligned networks, with no ideological core (Ryan 1992), and the state appeared to be being 'hollowed out' (Rhodes 1994), with its traditional responsibilities being dispersed vertically (to local and supranational institutions) and horizontally (to courts, executive agencies and civil society organisations). New modes of governance consonant with state reconfiguration create a growing reliance on technocratic policy networks that operate outside the legislative arena (Rhodes 1996). With the growth in new public management (introducing private sector techniques of governance into the public sector) there has been a notable tendency to devalue in-house policy expertise in favour of contracting out (Sawer 2005, 7). Whereas earlier forms of governance required managers with bureaucratic skills, this newer form of partnership governance requires 'strategic brokers', who have the ability to network with community activists and promote change, creating a newly professionalised cohort of 'social entrepreneurs' (Larner and Craig 2005, 405). Interestingly, women are disproportionately represented in these brokering roles (Larner and Craig 2005, 420), suggesting that this new mode of governance has both facilitated, and been facilitated by, feminist demands for greater political representation. State feminists have acted as key strategic brokers, working with feminist activists and women's organisations to create partnerships with a professionalised network of 'gender experts'. Together, the strategic brokers within women's policy agencies and social entrepreneurs within women's NGOs have created powerful new forms of governance designed to improve the substantive representation of women.

For example, states seeking gender advice and knowledge increasingly contract NGOs to provide research on indicators of gender inequality, or evaluate the effectiveness of policy outcomes. Feminist NGOs are therefore increasingly involved in gender policy assessments, project execution, and social services delivery (Alvarez 1999, 182). In this way NGOs have become professionalised technical experts, in a contractual relationship to the state, rather than autonomous organisations advocating political change. These processes have given many NGOs better access to state policymaking, but also increased their distance from more movement-oriented activities. As one commentator notes: 'the perfect sites to channel international funds now seeking alternatives to the state', feminist organisations become 'entangled with the development apparatus and neoliberal policies, and even financially dependent on them for this subsistence' (Mendoza 2002, 308). Given that their role as gender experts frequently entails advising on or carrying out government women's programmes, the boundary between the policy community and appointed officials is blurred and the space for critical advocacy is lost to more technical endeavours. As a result, processes of representation pursued by gender machineries look increasingly complicit in new styles of governance (Bacchi and Eveline 2004, 103–104).

One manifestation of this is to be found in the changing form of claims-making, which is taking an increasingly empirical and numerical form. Notions of good governance have always stressed the importance of basing policy-making on factual evidence rather than on mere opinion (Rose 1991), but evidence-based policy-making has become particularly important over the last decade and is now the dominant model for evaluating claims in the policy process (Marston and Watts 2003). This growing commitment to evidence-based policy-making generates a tendency to conceive representation in a statistical rather than participatory fashion, privileging data rather than voice, using gender-disaggregated statistics as a key tool to represent women's interests.

As evidence-based policy-making is argued to facilitate greater transparency than was afforded by older models of incrementalism, research and expertise are increasingly required to ensure that policy outcomes align with policy intentions (Laforest and Orsini 2005), thereby privileging specific social science methodologies, frequently relying on quantitative studies that generate 'objective' truth claims.

In focusing attention on the process of claims-making, the constitutive understanding of the representation of gender promises to illuminate the differing manner in which representative claims can be made. In this case, it draws attention to the key role that quantitative indicators, empirical data and objective expertise are coming to play in the representative process undertaken by feminist NGOs and femocrats. Feminist organisations are fast becoming responsible 'evidence producing' organisations peopled by 'gender experts'. They adopt this style of claims-making because the emergence of evidence-based policy-making offers social activists in NGOs new opportunities, unsettling as it does the monopoly on policy knowledge previously claimed by the traditional public servant and thereby creating space for alternative types of knowledge claims (Laforest and Orsini 2005). Keen to explore new opportunities to filter their claims into the policy-making processes, and—no doubt anticipating problems of credibility conferral if they were to speak from subjective marginalised locations (Fricker 1998; McConkey 2004)—feminist NGOs are drawing on traditional social science methods and knowledge structures to do so.

This privileges a certain form of knowledge, produced by social scientific enquiry, which does not simply describe the world, but also enacts it (Law and Urry 2004, 391). In

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this way gender experts contribute to the enactment of certain sorts of gendered worlds, representing gender in a constitutive manner. The fact that the representative process is becoming evidence-based and quantitative is particularly interesting given that feminist critiques of objectivity have long been influential (Lloyd 1984; Harding 1991; Code 1995; Prokhovnik 1999), with feminist theorists routinely arguing that empiricist epistemologies marginalise those whose knowledge is not readily amenable to objectification, driving a wedge between those perceived to be making special interest claims and those capable of transcending their own narrow concerns to make objective judgements.

While this has clearly empowered many women politically, it has also 'governmentalised' their professional functions and political ambitions. Given the dominance of evidence-based policy-making NGOs are called upon to produce knowledge that will further the goals of their organisations and sway policy-makers. The tendency to marginalise those who do not articulate their demands in the appropriate form has not been lost on many women within civil society. A pamphlet of The Revolutionary Women of the Philippines, for example, argues that mainstreaming is 'an imperialist scheme for co-opting the world's women, buying off once committed activists' (Baden and Goetz 1997, 6), while panellists in a Forum organised by the Applied Socio-economic Research organization of Pakistan argued that gender analysis had become overly technocratic due to the professionalisation of the women's movement. Meanwhile, Baden and Goetz argue that gender analysis, including the use of gender disaggregated statistics which are frequently undertaken to generate a more robust analysis of the likely impact of policies and so prevent policy failure, has the function of reducing 'gender' to a product: 'the gender-disaggregation approach … tends to a static and reductionist definition of gender (as women/man) … Bureaucratic requirements for information tend to strip away the political content of information on women's interests and reduce it to a set of needs or gaps, amenable to administrative decisions about the allocation of resources' (Baden and Goetz 1997, 7).

Professionalised feminist NGOs adopt an increasingly technocratic mode of operation that encourages a rationalised communication premised on evidence-based indicators of an accepted conception of gender equality, rather than a more deliberative communication premised on subjective expressions of politically contested gender equality. In these circumstances, the task of women's policy agencies is to depict gender inequality in a way that 'both grasps its truths' and 're-presents it in a form in which it can enter the sphere of conscious political calculation' (Rose and Miller 1992, 183). This suggests that the embrace of evidence-based policy-making processes shapes the nature of representative claims-making in relation to gender, delimiting the manner in which gender gets represented by using gender as a synonym for women (Carver 1996) and thereby obfuscating those relational understandings of gender that might allow for alternative forms of policy framing.

Conclusion

This paper suggests that analyses of the substantive representation of women (SRW) could usefully be augmented by interrogation of the constitutive representation of gender (CRG). The notion of CRG draws both on developments in gender theory, which focus of gendered relations rather than sexed bodies, and developments in theories of

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representation, which focus on the process of 'claims-making' as constitutive. While the SRW captures one moment in the representative process, whereby representatives articulate the preferences and interests of the female electorate, the CRG captures a different moment, whereby representatives engage in constitutive practices with respect to gendered relations. In order to explore the ways in which the CRG occurs, the paper focuses on the extra-parliamentary arena, exploring the claims-making practices of women's policy agencies and feminist NGOs.

While the literature to date has tended to focus on WPAs as alternative arenas for the SRW, complementing the activities of female parliamentarians in 'speaking for women', the focus here is on the ways in which these bodies represent gender in increasingly technocratic modes of operation and generate particular constitutive practices, many of which privilege marketised representations of gender relations. The introduction of the notion of the CRG, coupled with a focus on its operation in the extra-parliamentary arena, is intended to draw attention to the disciplinary power exerted by new modes of governance over these forms of representative claims-making and the images of gender they produce. The theoretical contribution to be gained by introducing the concept of CRG into the literature on women and politics therefore lies in the scope it gives to analysing and understanding the *process* of political claims-making, and the questions it raises concerning nature of the *power* relations that shape the productive and disciplinary manifestations of this claims-making process.

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NOTE

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