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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Between Westminster and Brussels: Putting the "Parliament" in Parliamentary Ethnography

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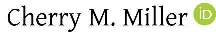

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Abstract

Gender and politics scholars are increasingly making appeals to ethnographic methodology to bring important contributions to understand the reproduction of gender, gender hierarchies, gendered relations, and their redress in parliamentary settings. This article draws upon fieldwork conducted in the U.K. House of Commons and the European Parliament and finds distinctive gendered cultures and norms in debating and working parliaments. Focusing on one dimension of this distinction—the parliamentary debating chamber—the article argues that parliamentary ethnography provides novel empirical insights into this conceptual distinction and into empirical understandings of gendered debating and working parliaments. While parliamentary ethnography is a fruitful innovation, the article discusses the drawbacks of this methodology and provides feminist reflection on ways to make it more accessible.

Keywords: parliaments; parliamentary ethnography; gender and politics; institutions

Parliamentary ethnography offers a productive methodology to explore how gender, gender hierarchies, and gender redress are continually remade in parliaments' inner workings. This potential has sparked interest among anthropologists and political scientists in ethnography as both a method and a methodology to study parliaments. Ethnography does not search for laws but for context-specific gendered meanings, how these meanings are negotiated, and how they position gendered parliamentary actors unequally as they perform their duties. This article extends analysis of how parliamentary ethnographies foreground the local conditions of different parliaments (Crewe 2017a) and

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considers what paying attention to parliamentary differences might reveal about the operation of gender in different parliaments.

Scholarship on gender and institutions suggests that ethnography may be a beneficial, methodology to approach innumerable research questions from multiple epistemological perspectives. Ethnography affords triangulation on how formal and informal rules and practices interact in ways that enable and constrain actors seeking to pursue gendered reforms. Ethnography allows researchers to observe the micro-foundations (Lowndes 2020) of parliamentary settings, such as the enforcement of sanctions (Chappell and Galea 2017), the way that party statutes work in practice (Smrek 2020), gendered recruitment in parliamentary administrations (Miller 2022b), and the activities of parties and political groups as democratic actors in legislatures (Kantola and Miller 2021; Miller 2022a). Informal norms that are "hidden and embedded in the everyday practices that are disguised as standard and taken-for-granted" (Chappell and Waylen 2013, 605) may be better explored through ethnography. Ethnography is useful to study gender in parliaments *over time* and to explore power at the capillaries, as well as to raise new questions using a combination of tools (Miller 2020, 2021, 2022a). It is no wonder that secondments to parliaments have been undertaken by those pursuing diversity-sensitive parliaments (Erikson and Verge 2022). Furthermore, there has been a push to consider gendered actors' "human hearts" (Lowndes and Roberts 2013, 145), and ethnography can gain a better purchase on the uneven affective burdens that shape parliamentary actors' work environments.

Ethnography can be applied to a range of feminist questions, such as providing a thicker analysis of the connection between descriptive and substantive representation (Mackay 2009). Ethnography can better explore how actors are multiply positioned, how actors differ within groups (Brown 2014), and how institutional reforms are "nested" in broader institutional environments (Mackay 2014). Ethnography is a significant component of an array of methodological innovations in recent agenda-setting literature to understand parliaments as gendered workplaces (Erikson and Verge 2022) where normative whiteness is upheld (Kantola et al., forthcoming). Ethnography may also contribute to assessing how gender inequalities reproduced every day can affect the depth of democracy (Crewe 2017a; Erikson and Verge 2022, 3). For interpretivist scholars, ethnography averts tendencies to predetermine what we mean by gender and takes the meaning of gender as a central point of inquiry. Overall, then, there are several advantages of taking an ethnographic approach for feminist scholars of gender and institutions.

Given that parliaments are heterogeneous, this contribution reflects on how this heterogeneity contributes to gender, gender hierarchies, and their redress and the empirical insights that ethnography lends to exploring these. Although there are many typologies of legislatures, this article chooses the debating and working parliament typology used by comparativists. The article draws on two parliaments: the U.K. House of Commons (UKHC), which is an archetypal "debating parliament"—where the chamber is the focus—and the European Parliament (EP), which is now a "working parliament"—where committees are the focus of parliamentary activity. It is not the goal to assess whether the parliaments fit

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these classifications, but to probe how these contexts affect how gender is made meaningful in these settings.

In terms of comparative legislative studies, U.K. parliamentary studies has been critiqued as being methodologically nationalist (Judge 1983), though this is changing (Boswell, Corbett, and Rhodes 2019; Malley 2012). This differs from EP scholarship, which has considered how national parliaments have become "Europeanized" and compared the EP with the U.S. Congress (Kreppel 2002) and the Bundestag (Bowler and Farrell 1999). Research on Southeast Asian parliaments compares those that emphasize "speaking" and "law making" (Adiputri 2019). Shirin Rai (2011) and Emma Crewe (2017a) have laid out comparative research agendas on ethnographic approaches to parliaments. Crewe (2017a, 20) recommends attending to "culture, history, and reflexivity in order to offer thick interpretation." Meanwhile, feminist political scientists have argued for a "comparative politics of gender and institutions" to provide, first, a deeper understanding of specific institutional "logics of appropriateness," and second, how these institutional arrangements shape the way actors experience their gender and their opportunities to pursue change (Chappell 2006, 223). Comparative approaches have explored sexual harassment in Westminster-style democracies (Collier and Raney 2018). The key research question posed in this article is, what insights into the distinctive gendered workings of the parliament does parliamentary ethnography generate in two different contexts: the UKHC and the EP, a debating and a working parliament, respectively?

This article draws on two parliamentary ethnographies. First, it draws on the UKHC in the 55th U.K. Parliament (2010–15). I explored the UKHC as a workplace and how gender was continuously performed in the broader activities of parliamentary actors. The second parliamentary ethnography was part of a broader project on the EP's political groups. Fieldwork commenced at the end of the 8th Parliament (2018–19) and the beginning of the 9th Parliament (2019–20). This ethnography took a political focus, centering on activities, rules, and practices in seven to eight supranational political groupings vis-à-vis the parliament from a gender perspective.

The article is structured in four sections. First, the article considers the "parliamentary" in "parliamentary ethnography" and presents the analytical distinction between debating and working parliaments. After making this distinction, the article then empirically explores the insights about gender that were gained in the gendered UKHC debating parliament and the gendered EP working parliament. It then considers the drawbacks of parliamentary ethnography before reflecting on what ethnography added to this analytical distinction and its significance for studying gender in parliaments.

Parliamentary Ethnography in "Debating Parliaments" and "Working Parliaments"

This section advances one proposal for what a "parliamentary ethnography" that considers the heterogeneity of parliaments might look like (see also Crewe 2017a). Paying attention to the second half of the couplet first, ethnography is a

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methodology that combines tools of observational research such as interviews, shadowing, hanging out, meeting ethnography, documentary analysis, and focus groups with an ethnographic sensibility to create a thicker understanding of social relations in a setting (Schatz 2009). Parliaments have predominantly had a representation focus. A pioneer of parliamentary ethnography, Richard Fenno (2003, 4) operates from an "activities" focus of political actors, to show the multiple activities that constitute political representation. Parliamentary ethnography, then, means analyzing how political actors participate and ascribe meaning to multiple interlocking activities as part of their everyday representative work.

Parliamentary ethnography is an emerging cognate field to political ethnography (Benzecry and Baiocchi 2017). I use the term "parliamentary ethnography" rather than "ethnography of parliaments" deliberately to denote that parliaments conjure an array of normative, power, spatial, legislative, and communicative aspects that affect the object and practice of research. This includes, for example, the elected and representational relationship of parliamentarians; the pressure for transparency from parliaments; the partisan conflicts and allegiances in parliaments; and the styles of interview response, since parliamentary actors' professional and political views are often solicited. Scheppele (2004) employs a similar conceptual label to discuss "constitutional ethnography" rather than "an ethnography of constitutions." Borrowing from Scheppele, I provisionally define parliamentary ethnography as the study of the formal and informal activities of parliaments (debating, legislating, scrutinizing, communicating, and leading) as well as their substance (actors, architecture, cultures, and working environments), using methods that can recover the lived details of the performance of these entities.

Parliamentary ethnographies have interdisciplinary strands, from science and technology studies (Brichzin 2020), architectural analysis (Dányi 2013), legislative studies (Geddes 2019), anthropology (Crewe 2015), and cultural theory (Rai and Spary 2019). Two trends in parliamentary studies can be discerned: first, a movement toward micropolitical analysis (Loewenberg 2011, 113), and second, toward interpretivist parliamentary studies (Geddes 2019; Leston-Bandiera 2016). Micropolitical analysis has two variants: one that is more survey based and has developed role typologies and another that has employed anthropological research techniques (Lowenberg 2011). Interpretevist scholars are developing "idiographic comparative studies" (Boswell, Corbett, and Rhodes 2019) to retain richness in comparisons of politicians' and parliaments' shared "dilemmas." Emma Crewe (2017b, 158), an anthropologist of parliaments, concludes that "on the whole ethnographic methods remain mysterious to political science." In terms of the UKHC, recent ethnographies have been conducted (Crewe 2015; Geddes 2019; Malley 2012; Miller 2021; Orton, Marcella, and Boxter 2000), while the EP has a longer genealogy of ethnography (Abélès 1993; Busby 2013; Miller 2022a; Wodak 2003).

There is concern that parliaments have been treated in "broad strokes" and that scholars should attend to the varieties of parliaments (Palonen 2018, 6). This concern contrasts with the conceptual literature on the topic. There are several differences between the UKHC and EP. The EP has sui generis features: its transnational[1] and multilingual nature,[2] the larger scale of legislation in terms of the 440 million population affected, its central-periphery characteristics, the degree of politicization of the parliamentary administration, the lack of taxation

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powers, and the questioning of its legitimacy by Euroskeptic groups. Experts call the EP a "special parliament" (Wiesner 2014). National parliaments, meanwhile, face particular challenges and opportunities for gendered actors since they "are intimately connected to the rest of the nation" (Crewe 2017a, 16).

Foundational differences between the U.K. Parliament and the EP are made in the conceptual distinction between a "debating parliament" and a "working parliament." Variations of this distinction have been elaborated by comparativist scholars of the EP and UKHC (Dann 2003; Lord 2018; Palonen 2018; Tiilikainen and Wiesner 2016), South Asian parliaments (Adiputri 2019), and Nordic parliaments (Arter 2013, 198). This distinction has been explored for policy debates (Auel and Raunio 2014, 23) and the practice of parliamentary opposition (Poyet and Raunio 2021). A working parliament[3] is "a legislature separated from the executive and centered around strong committees," and a debating parliament is "a legislature characterized by a fusion of parliamentary majority and government as well as a mainly debating, not policy making plenary" (Dann 2003, 550). This distinction builds on Polsby's (1975) conception of an arena versus a transformative parliament. Table 1 outlines four sets of parliamentary activities that are characteristic of working and debating parliaments.

Table 1. Debating Parliament and Working Parliament

Thematic Areas	Debating Parliament	Working Parliament
Parliaments influenced by these typologies	UKHC	EP
1. Plenary chamber	▪ Focal point of activity ▪ The "forum of the nation" ▪ Politicians are parliamentarians ▪ Accountability is exercised by routinely questioning the government about its policy decisions	▪ Executive politicians are forbidden from being members of the legislature ▪ The opposition between the legislature and the executive is not played out regularly on the plenary floor ▪ Less public accountability ▪ Parties explicitly control the floor time
2. Committees	▪ Weaker committees with fewer legislative powers ▪ Organizational structure is more streamlined	▪ Strong and specialized committees ▪ Politicians are legislators ▪ Organizational structure is more developed
3. Executive-legislative relationships	▪ Fusion of majority party to government	▪ Executive is separate from government
4. Parliamentary party politics	▪ Parliamentary organizing majorities are narrowly based, often fixed ▪ Parliamentary party management is centralized	▪ Parliamentary majorities are highly coalitional and flexible ▪ Decentralized party management

Sources: Adapted from Dann (2003); Kreppel (2014); Lord (2018); Polsby (1975).

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I identify these four ideal dimensions as discrete (though ultimately entangled (Crewe, 2021)) categories of examination. This is because they draw attention to a number of phenomena such as forums (plenary and committees), structural relationships (executive-legislature), and political-ideological coverage and representation (parliamentary party politics) and actors who emerge within these institutional arrangements. Furthermore, these four dimensions are often targeted by parliamentary reforms by feminist actors, parliamentary studies scholars, and politicians alike to bring about change in the performance, representativeness, and activities of democratic institutions.

The two types of parliaments are only ideal types, and each parliament moves between the two types as it institutionalizes and strengthens different functions. In reality, parliaments are "composites of various aspects" (Palonen 2018, 6). There is no academic consensus on this distinction. While the UKHC has been critiqued in terms of its lack of powers compared with the executive, this reading has been challenged by some experts on the U.K. Parliament, especially since 2010 (Russell and Gover 2017; House of Commons Liaison Committee 2019, 27–28). Meanwhile, the separation of powers in the European Union was temporarily altered in 2014 with the Spitzencandidatur process. Appraisals of parliamentary power can be ideological. The EP is dismissed by intergovernmentalists as a conference—a transnational political assembly without a debating culture. Federalists herald the EP as a full parliament, if not a "legislative powerhouse" (Kohler 2014). Ethnography can explore more subtle institutional dynamics of this schema. I maintain this distinction as a heuristic tool, since recent scholarship has either implicitly or explicitly drilled down to its practicalities. Examples are studies of UKHC parliamentary speeches (Finlayson 2016) and of the rationalization of the EP (Brack and Costa 2018). While academic consensus on this distinction may be uneven, this differentiation was hierarchically wielded as a sharp polemic by Euroskeptic politicians. Therefore, traces of this distinction have renewed iterations in contemporary discussions of parliamentary democracy.

To date, the employment of this framework to explore the inner workings of parliaments has been gender-neutral. It may be consequential for gender regimes (Lovenduski 2012). It is important to study the gendered underpinnings of mainstream frameworks as well as the symbols that these arrangements support (Verge 2022). This is because parliaments are not unified wholes and are experienced differently (Rai and Spary 2019). Parliaments are always strengthening different functions. Abels (2019, 19) therefore asks a pertinent question: do powers "move" around to other forums to ensure more male dominance, or do men move into these areas? Furthermore, parliamentary innovations are nested (Mackay 2014), and this may have implications for power relations.

How have others studied gender and parliaments? There is a growing international movement to analyze the gendered organization of parliaments and their degree of feminization—meaning, inter alia, actors of all genders in leadership positions, gender equality legislation, and working cultures and practices (Crewe 2014; Childs 2016; Erikson and Josefsson 2019; Palmieri 2011; Verge 2022). Abels's (2019) reflection about gender's movements in the strengthening of parliamentary functions is pertinent, but "process" questions have taken

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prominence—for example, how parliamentary reforms and the relative strength of the parliaments have altered femocrats' and critical actors' room to maneuver (Childs and Challender 2019; Mushaben 2019), rather than what happens to *meanings* of gender. My interest is to explore gender as an analytical category (Beckwith 2005): the constructions of *gender, gender hierarchies*, and *gender redress* in these different parliaments. *Gender* refers to the meanings with which gender is entangled in the parliaments. *Gender hierarchies* refers to how "man," "woman," affects, and activities are gendered in hierarchical binaries. *Gender redress* refers to how transformation has been constructed, labored and resisted.

The U.K. Parliament is arguably an ideal debating parliament (Auel and Raunio 2014, 15; Dann 2003, 550). Plenary culture is often adversarial. The U.K. Parliament became less of a debating parliament in the late nineteenth century, when party government weakened individual oratory in the chamber (Williams 1995, 395); however, the chamber is still the place where societal interests are articulated overall. Attempts to revive the chamber for backbenchers have included granting more Urgent Questions. At the time of the ethnography, 22% of the UKHC members were women. This increased to 29% in 2015, 32% in 2017, and 34% in 2019. The Women and Equalities Committee was established only relatively recently (2015). Bill committees are temporary. Unlike in the EP; the Select Committee system deals more with scrutiny, than legislation; executive-legislative relations favor a power-hoarding executive; and the party system has largely been majoritarian and dominated by two parties.

Analyses have gendered the UKHC along, inter alia, the four dimensions outlined in Table 1. On plenary recognition, women members of Parliament (MPs) have suggested that men's styles of behavior are valued (Childs 2004; Lovenduski 2012); that men make more interruptions (Shaw 2000); that women are subjected to master suppression techniques (Ilie 2018); that women disproportionately refer to concrete issues and use experience (Hargrave and Langengen 2020); and that Black and women MPs are overrepresented as generalists on select committees (McKay et al 2019). Parliament as a recruitment pool (Annesley, Beckwith, and Franceschet 2019) and the role model effect of frontbench/backbench women's chamber participation (Blumenau 2019) have been explored in executive-legislative relations. Finally, gender and party discipline have been explored (Cowley and Childs 2003).

The EP embodies a normative "foundational myth" that it is a gender equality actor (MacRae 2010). The EP is conceptualized as the "avant-garde" (Tiilikainen and Wiesner 2016), and this modernity can be falsely extended to racialized gender equality (Lewicki 2017). The Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee was constructed in 1979, and its members act strategically (Ahrens 2016). The percentage of women in EP reached 30% in 1999, 37% in 2014, and 41% in 2019. For some scholars, "critical acts" have changed the legislative culture (Mushaben 2019). There are some grounds for support. The EP adopted five core resolutions from 2002 to 2016 recognizing its position as a workplace and legislature and as a self-appointed gender-mainstreaming actor (Rule 239) in its outputs and practices. Coordinated research is gendering the EP's policies, structures, and practices (Ahrens and Rolandsen Agustín 2019). Racist and sexist

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language and contestation of gender equality norms are increasing in the plenary (Bartłomiejczyk 2020; Kantola and Lombardo 2020). Because the EP is characterized by consensus (Novak, Rozenberg, Selma Bendjaballah 2021), contextualization is needed on barriers for gendered actors (Ahrens and Rolandsen Agustín 2019, 9). In executive-legislature relations, although femocrats work in a "velvet triangle" of governance (Woodward 2015), an "empowerment paradox" exists whereby untransparent dealings with the European Commission leave women "like Queens without crowns" (Mushaben 2019, 80). In terms of party competition, the political groups' politicized gender equality constructions (Kantola 2022) impact their working practices.

In sum, I argue that is important to interrogate the types of parliamentarism inherent in parliamentary ethnography to explore how gender is experienced vis-à-vis norms of parliamentarianism. Researching typologies of legislatures is a valuable exercise in the preparatory "legwork" stage (Wilkinson 2013, 136) of fieldwork, so as not to "go in cold" (McDonald 2005), and to consider sensitivity and resistance around gender, power, and parliamentarianism. The article focuses on the plenaries of each parliament. Feminist legislative scholarship has converged on the importance of the parliamentary chamber (Spary 2021). Parliamentary speech is important for rational reelection interests and credit claiming, but also for deliberative ends and for advancing ideas and framings (Bächtiger 2014). It is no wonder that actors seek "a chamber of one's own" (Verge 2022).

Exploring Gendered Debating and Working Parliaments: Methods

This article is based on a unique ethnographic data set on two parliaments. I used many fieldwork methods simultaneously in each parliament. Practices in both included documentary analysis, interviewing, meeting ethnography, shadowing, (non)participant observation, managing positionality, and arranging "go-alongs" (i.e., accompanying gendered actors to political events). The parliamentary pass allowed for "hanging out" (Nair 2021)—that is, a more diffused and dialogic practice requiring "informal, ludic and sociable interactions" (Nair 2021, 10). Immersion in both parliaments also allowed for analyses of atmospheres, which is key to feminist analysis. Feminist considerations of atmospheres (Leff 2021, 2) attend to unevenness, stickiness, circulation, and opening new atmospheres for ethical exploration.

In the UKHC, access was achieved through an Opposition MP who was sympathetic to the aims of the project and sponsored a parliamentary pass (April 2014–September 2014). With political science training, I had contacts through an MA parliamentary placement scheme at the University of Leeds, a "strategic positionality" (Reyes 2018). A range of observational and interviewing methods were employed, including: shadowing an MP; by-appointment requests to attend meetings as a nonparticipant observer; (non)participant observation and 68 semistructured interviews with MPs, parliamentary researchers, members of the parliamentary administration and parliamentary actors broadly conceptualized, such as journalists. Research was recorded in "scratch notes" and then a fieldwork diary.

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Practical and subjective research lessons were learned from the first ethnography. *Practically*, there were some organizational symmetries between the UKHC and the EP, such as general categories of staff and hiring practices. Strategic positionality (Reyes 2018), such as party activity and connections to regional areas, was a technique learned to secure access. *Subjectively*, I learned to approach people and ask to attend meetings. The ethnography in the EP was different because I was executing it for a team. This required seeking access to events and interviews that were significant for project members and also sending fieldnotes to be uploaded to Atlas-ti for group coding, alongside the interviews.

In the EP, access - or rather, entry, was achieved in two stages: in the 8th Parliament (October 2018–February 2019) through the offices of individual members of the EP (MEPs); in the 9th Parliament through a two-month academic visitor position at the European Parliamentary Research Service (European Parliament 2020) (January–March 2020); and by-appointment requests to access meetings. A key difference was the access needed to eight political groups. I used "strategic positionality" again, first through national backgrounds (United Kingdom, Finland, and Germany), then snowballing to find offices willing to participate. In the EP, the physical library reading room provided a base to contact parliamentary actors for interviews, shadowing opportunities, and access to group meetings—therefore increasing the mobility and positionality of the study. Overall, nine MEPs from different political groups were shadowed and by-appointment access to group meetings and working groups was made. In the second stage, an observational protocol derived from the concepts of feminist institutionalism was developed and used when attending events and meetings within the parliamentary setting. It included seven categories: (1) event setting, (2) power relations, (3) democracy, (4) gendered practices, (5) the political group as a workplace, (6) affect and (7) researcher role. Research was recorded in 36 observation protocols. In addition, over 130 interviews were conducted in two phases: first, 53 interviews in Brussels in the final year of the 8th legislature (2014–19), and second, 70 interviews in Brussels, MEPs' home countries, and via Skype during the 9th legislature (2019–). Fully anonymous semistructured interviews were transcribed and team-coded. In both ethnographies, dialogue was maintained with individual field participants.

Access is both a topic and a resource. It is of interest which dimensions are harder to access in the debating and working parliaments and why. In principle, the televised debating chambers are open to visitors, though Prime Ministers Questions sessions are more difficult, since they require tickets. Observing plenary speeches is, arguably, nonparticipative. Shaw (2020, 32) recommends attending debates to acquire a realist purchase on "more of the interaction and . . . the rapport or the confrontation between speakers." Drawing on Sauter (2021), I argue that the plenaries can be immersive. Sauter suggests that immersion is achieved not just through physical co-presence but through curiosity, intensity, involvement, and the performance's responsiveness, attention, associations, and contextualization. Immersion included following a parliamentary tour to record the physical setting of the chamber. A schoolteacher exclaimed when walking through A–F, G–M, and N–Z voting stations in the UKHC where

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MPs are ticked off, "I've actually stood in the right one!"—highlighting the immersive experience. One parliamentary researcher remarked upon watching "his" MP in a debate: "that's the line I gave him." Likewise, he also confessed to not being immersed in chamber activities (e.g., attending to personal matters during the budget). The time specificity of debates can lead to intolerance in spectators' galleries, for example, if a visitor's group experiences rather than follows a debate. Facilities for immersion in the EP include the provision of earphones with interpretation, though these become progressively more uncomfortable for monolingual visitors. A3 seating plans are distributed to visitors. All MEPs have numbered seats, and their surnames are listed—therefore not presupposing knowledge of MEPs. This immersion lends insights into the embodied ways that gendered parliamentary actors perform their duties and how plenary sittings animate parliamentary worlds.

Ethnography is not in and of itself a feminist method, and it can be quite to the contrary, but when tied to feminist theory and addressing feminist questions about parliaments, it has the potential to produce valid insights for change. Ethnography requires funding for accommodation, travel, and leave from teaching. Caring responsibilities can impede longer trips. Parliaments may be inhospitable for racialized or disabled researchers. Legitimacy can be questioned. Crisis times make power imbalances acutely felt, and researchers may depend on male gatekeepers. Access might require emotional labor. Fieldwork roles and strategies, such as the "acceptable incompetent" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2019) or being affable, can be damaging for women. Parliaments are rich research sites, and prioritizations have to be made between activities. Shadowing a politician, for example, narrows the observational range while providing mobility across research spaces.

In addition to structural support, such as funding, following Sauter (2021), conceptual work might reflect on what counts as "immersion" and an "ethnographic sensibility" in feminist ethnographic research and the conditions for making it possible. Physical co-presence does not guarantee immersion since participation may be exhausting, and some researchers may feel ambivalent about parliamentary activities. The methods, techniques, and standards for "achieving" immersion and an "ethnographic sensibility" might differ by parliamentary researcher and their personal experience, curiosity and reflection.

Overall, then, these two unique data sets provide an unparalleled opportunity to reflect on what happens to *constructions* of gender, gender hierarchies, gender relations and their redress in debating and working parliaments and what ethnography adds to our understandings of these. The next section turns to an empirical discussion of the plenary chambers.

Gendered Debating and Working Parliaments

This empirical section explores the UKHC and EP through one dimension: the plenary chamber. Parliamentary actors use different terminologies. UKHC actors describe its debating "chamber," which has connotations of an enclosed space. Meanwhile, parliamentary actors in the EP refer to its "plenary" or "hemicycle."

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Plenary has connotations of one place in a broader parliamentary calendar, while *hemicycle* has connotations of the panoramic, curved shape. I consider what empirical insights surrounding gender, gender hierarchies and gender redress were learned from parliamentary ethnographies of both chambers/plenaries.

U.K. House of Commons Plenary Chamber

The UKHC has two debating chambers: the main debating chamber and one in Westminster Hall. This article concentrates on the former. Chamber activity, such as parliamentary speeches and oral questions, serve the functions of controlling the government and communicating with the electorate. In debating parliaments, "debate is the centre of parliamentary life" (Dann 2003), and this shapes expectations and valuations about parliamentary actors' behavior. External forces—that is, public opinion—are important for legislative outcomes (Polsby 1975, 291). I will consider how gender, gender hierarchies, and gender redress shifted in the plenary chamber.

Gender

In the UKHC, gender is entangled with notions of spectacle—there is an ocular dimension to the chamber proceedings (Finlayson 2016)—and affects the conditions in which parliamentary actors perform their duties. Spectacle is a mixed medium, including the material setting, atmospheres, bodies, and practices. Ethnography facilitated readings of the material environment through which gender is made meaningful. There are multiple data points in the ethnography that reinforce chamber activity. In the physical Victorian and self-conscious design of the buildings, eyes are drawn upward toward Gothic brickwork, and vertical lines invoke hierarchy. Looking up toward the stained-glass windows in the Central Lobby and a New Dawn window, the walk to the chamber connotes aspiration. Power and authority are produced through the chamber's spatial layout. Parliamentary actors orient themselves using language such as the "Speaker's Chair" and "the Table." There is a wooden snuff (tobacco) box immediately outside the chamber, made out of the bombed wreckage from the pre–World War II chamber. Coats of arms on shields (a piece of armor) to mark death in public service are displayed. A woman MP described her immersion in the chamber as "other-worldly"[4] because of the physical enclosure, (un)contactability, and ornamental surroundings. An "other-worldly" affective atmosphere affects gender relations because it can lead to tolerance of behavior outside of workplace norms. By recovering the lived detail of the chamber through material analysis and the subjectivities of MPs, we get a greater purchase on the meanings attached to these physical environments and how they matter for gender relations.

Bodies are also consumed as spectacle, for example, in the renowned "men in tights"—that is, officials in traditional court dress. The serjeant-at-arms carries a mace (a medieval weapon) and sits in a designated seat in the chamber. The mace is invested with meanings of royal authority, without which the chamber cannot sit. The first woman serjeant-at-arms, Jill Pay, was described as embodying

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"granite" when performing the procession of the Speaker of the House of Commons.[5] Doorkeepers tied their hair low, which has connotations of solemnity rather than youthful ponytails. The cycle of interaction between MPs and the Speaker is that MPs walk in and bow at the Speaker's chair and engage in bobbing to be called. There is a self-consciousness to the Speaker's chair. Unlike in the EP, staff sit at the table in front of the Speaker, rather than on the same level. This highlights the persistent cultural norm and investment of a debating parliament, since the moderator is elevated above staff. The Speaker has corporeal significance as a symbolic embodiment of parliamentary democracy. MPs were vigilant for Speakers' facial expressions. A woman Deputy Speaker, Eleanor Laing, the chairman [*sic*] of Ways and Means, lowered her voice to call the chamber to order. Practices conjure up spectacle, too. Unlike in the EP, MPs are sworn in in the parliamentary chamber. Morning prayers are held in the chamber, during which MPs face the wall. Therefore, ethnography showed the lived detail of how gender is reproduced in bodies, practices, and settings of modesty and decoration in the UKHC chamber.

Unlike in the EP, plenary, oratory, and eloquence are institutionalized norms. An example is the terminology of a "maiden speech." Oratory is decorative and ornamental to democracy (Finlayson 2016). As well as highly ritualized masculinity, there can be highly ritualized moments of femininity, too. During the fieldwork, a key democratic political occasion occurred: the State Opening of Parliament, marking the start of the parliamentary year. The Loyal Address is a speech made in response to the Head of State, who announces the government's priorities for the year. The proposer is usually a promising early-career MP who is seconded by a long-standing parliamentarian. In 2015, MP Penny Mordaunt (Conservative, Portsmouth North, elected 2010), was only the second woman proposer in Queen Elizabeth II's reign. She dressed in a modest black dress with a collared shirt. Gender in her speech[6] was interwoven with flattery, heterosexual flirtation, charm, and liberal feminism. Gender was invoked in the fidelity to British aristocracy and tradition, such as name-checking the previous woman proposer, Lady Tweedsmuir. Mordaunt described the Conservative-led coalition government as a "right hand drive" and used personal anecdotes of her time as a navy reservist, such as receiving advice on how to care for penises and testicles. In this Loyal Address, Mordaunt was freer in her speech. She held the floor and her speech was rapturously received throughout Parliament. Visitors were also immersed, with women wearing fascinators and high heels and some men wearing formal morning suits. Humor is institutionalized in other exchanges in the UKHC, such as between the leader of the House of Commons and the shadow leader. These traditions form a temporary respite from party dominance and fighting in Parliament.

Despite the temporary respite from party politics, observing the chamber after the Loyal Address showed a vivid contrast in atmospheres. A week of debate follows on the contents of the queen's speech, such as a jobs and skills debate. The demands of accountability, ideology, and gender play out quite brutally on the plenary floor. Humor and laughter, rather than charm, were understood as provocative. Meanings of paternalism are entangled in the government's responsibility for decision-making. Performances of pleading masculinities were

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made by a formally powerless Opposition. The benches resembled church pews. A male MP used his whole body to lean forward and spoke with his hands together in a praying gesture, which nullified aggression. Opposition conjured protective masculinities with blaming, shaming, finger pointing, and assaults on manhood. Issue-focused discussions turned into personal confrontations. Following education cuts in earlier debates, a male MP shouted, "You're a miserable Pipsqueak of a man, Gove!"[7] Meanwhile, a former head teacher criticized the potential to "cut fast and cut furiously, as if it were some virility test."[8] Compassionate chamber moments are reserved for mental health and violence against women, and personal testimony is made (Spary 2021). These open up analytical questions for considering differences in the meaning of gender in different institutionally designated or policy-contingent debates.

Gender Hierarchies

In addition to allowing thick description of the spaces in which parliamentary actors perform their parliamentary duties, ethnography provided opportunities to consider how these environments *acted on* parliamentary actors. Hanging out showed that the dignified framework of rules that enfold Parliament arguably creates a false narrative of constraint. The division at the end of each debate, unlike in the EP, privileged able-bodied members who could access division lobbies that run parallel to the chamber, several times daily. MPs had eight minutes to reach the division lobby before "Lock the doors!" was shouted. This constraint is shown in artwork, such as the Division Bell, a cartoon in the press bar of parliamentary actors running to the division lobbies with their beer glasses. Bodies from Portcullis House descend the escalators into the "colonnade"—the walkway to the chamber with grand, heavy, stone columns. These walkways to the chamber provide spaces for intimacy; for example, an MP and a journalist may engage in deep conversation behind a column. Ethnography revealed the lived detail of approximating these rules, such as male staff members hurriedly locating suits for their Minister to appear at the despatch box. The constraints have different implications for men and women. Unlike in the EP, where the next speaker in a debate appears on screens, the plenary management of the UKHC lends itself to infantilization, since MPs are ignorant of when they will be called. There was a strong discourse of concerted time-wasting and inefficiency in the UKHC from women MPs. A woman MP said,

> XXX wouldn't tell her [position to speak in a debate]. She had to . . . ask the Whips if she could go to the toilet. She said: "I'm a grown woman, I've got a mortgage, I've run a business and I never thought that at this age . . . I would have to be asking if I could go to the toilet."[9]

Gender hierarchies also revolved around the practice of Opposition in the chamber, combined with the fact that the UKHC is a fused body in which the government and shadow frontbench are drawn from the Parliament. Shadowing a parliamentary private secretary revealed paradoxes. On the one hand, being a

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parliamentary private secretary in a masculinized policy area affords networking and using expertise. Conversely, gaining an independent voice is hard because the MP is forbidden to speak on the subject, for fear of contradicting the government/Opposition line. This is problematic for women, who face a penalty for party loyalty in the media (Cowley and Childs 2003). Within the chamber, "It is the male sort of attributes that you get noticed for. Attributes that are more recognized are tribal, being very definite in your view, and skilled at the put down."[10] Therefore, being a "good" party parliamentarian gets one plenary recognition. One MP lamented the aggressive and personalized atmosphere in which parliamentarians carried out their duties and therefore sought reforms, such as a behavioral code:

> They were out to get him on a *personal basis* and it felt worse than a Spanish bull ring. They wanted his blood. . . . And it was just horrible, nasty, petty . . . they were just like "attack attack"––knifing him the whole time . . . it's unprofessional, it's disrespectful, it's trying to literally be abusive to the other side and it's gang warfare. We talk against gangs in the public and in the street and yet we allow it in the chamber.[11]

Ethnography is a methodology to explore how (gender) hierarchies shift (Crewe 2021). Despite the dignified framework of rules and nomenclature (e.g., "the honourable member"), oratory is subjective and embodied. A former attorney general, Queen's Counsel Geoffrey Cox (Conservative, Torridge and West Devon, elected 2005) was lauded for his deep, booming voice and powerful narrations. His training in courtrooms had developed his voice muscles and aptitude for public speaking. Men with quieter voices struggled, such as in contexts to bid for questions in select committees, and sneering at accents occurred. Tone policing—that is, an anti-debate tactic that (un) consciously dismisses ideas through their delivery—occurs against BIPOC politicians in the chamber (Thompson 2021). Despite the Loyal Address being rapturously received, it raised questions as to whether heterosexuality as a humorous strategy is available to all MPs. Humor is made within certain respectable boundaries, and these boundaries are political and classed. Therefore, multiple points of data provided through ethnography show how oratory is subjective and furthers understanding of Parliament's inner workings.

Gender Redress

Overall, feminist MPs from multiple data points wanted a more "professional" environment. Because the UKHC chamber is seen as a forum for civil society, redress may be made through social media by feminist journalists. Regarding oratory and plenary recognition, informal advice is given to new MPs by colleagues to "just sit in the chamber loads."[12] Some leadership positions have been added to the dignified framework of nomenclature, such as the "Mother of the House" (Childs and Challender 2019) to match the "Father of the House" (the

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longest-serving MPs), to highlight women's contributions to parliamentarism. Individual speakers provided embodied guidance:

> X is very good at giving you signals . . . you know he is going to call you early as he kind of either make direct eye contact with you . . . he was so kind he could tell I was nervous . . . he gave a little smile and a thumbs up to me as if to say like: "it was your turn now and call you any minute."[13]

Ethnography revealed resistances to actors' strategies to navigate these environments. Ethnographic practices included securing by-appointment access to critical actors' meetings about pursuing gender equality reforms to the UKHC chamber. The actors coalesced in an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Women in Parliament. Partisan politics stymied institutional attempts at reforming the chamber. Some Labour women MPs were lukewarm toward the APPG and toward talking about gender in front of a "group of Tory men."[14] Ethnography showed that late nights of producing this report fell disproportionately on women. Despite obtaining permission to attend, I experienced resistance to attending an APPG meeting. This demonstrated how politically and personally sensitive plenary reform was (see also Childs and Challender 2019; Miller 2022b). One participant described low-level resistance and "snidey remarks":

> They're kind of like "well you're trying to stop us from talking in the Chamber" or "you're trying to hinder debate" . . . "well no actually, I want compassion and I want conviction and I want great debate but [not] personal insults and abuse alongside it" . . . maybe [they] sometimes thought that we were attacking tradition and history but I'm going: "I love what this place has achieved and what it does but we should all in any working environment we're in, be saying . . . how can we make it more efficient, more effective and improve professionalism and improve the working practices."[15]

Researchers' experiences of trying to access meetings, then, can increase understanding of the sensitive nature of parliamentary reform. Ethnography also allowed me to accumulate materials, garner curiosity, and ask grounded questions. For example, I asked an APPG member about the choice of cover for a report on Women in Parliament (a more traditional picture of New Palace Yard), which yielded more detailed interview responses. The choice between a traditional cover versus something "funkier" had been debated, and in the foregoing quotation, the MP emphasized her fidelity to parliamentary traditions.

The European Parliament Hemicycle

In the EP chamber, the hemicycle is used in multiple ways, such as discussing committee reports, legislative proposals, and amendments and posing questions to the European Commission. My documentary analysis ascertained the formal role of the plenary in the EP's Rules of Procedure and the Treaties. The Treaty of the European Union (Protocol 6a) indicates that the 12 periods of monthly plenary sessions in Strasbourg changed the configuration of the EP toward the debating

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parliament typology. This is because committees have to ask permission from the Conference of Presidents body in the EP (Corbett, Jacobs, and Neville 2016). Overall, though, "the trend is toward a greater emphasis on legislative activities than plenary debates" (Brack 2017, 126). I will consider how gender, gender hierarchies, and gender redress shifted in the dynamics of the plenary chamber.

Gender

As in the UKHC, ethnography facilitated readings of the material environment in which gender is made meaningful. The hemicycle is wide and sweeping. Eyes are drawn horizontally around the curves. From the perspective of gender, the royal blue seats in the Strasbourg hemicycle are gridded, heavy, and awkward to move. Watching debates online cannot show this. The gridded seating plan means that MEPs are spread out across the chamber and sometimes have few colleagues nearby to debate. The president of the EP, unlike the UKHC Speaker, does not have a procession. The president does occasionally hold press conferences. While the president might have a gender-balanced cabinet, ethnography showed contradictions, such as a male-dominated security team accompanying the president to press conferences. In terms of plenary management, staff sit next to the (vice) president chairing the debate, and there are interpretation booths. There are eight vice presidents who chair debates, unlike the smaller number of deputy speakers in the UKHC, though a panel of chairs exists for Westminster Hall debates. At the time of fieldwork, there had been only two women EP presidents (three as of 2022), shown in a visual timeline of presidents displayed on the Konstantinos Karamanlis bridge toward the Brussels plenary. The lack of symbolic and descriptive representation is more profound than the representation of the Speaker in the UKHC, since EP presidents have shorter terms, so there have been greater opportunities for change.

In the EP, plenary chamber debate has been curtailed through rationalization where democracy is exercised *through* parliament, but not *in* parliament (Brack and Costa 2018). This rationalization (Williams 1995) is political because the EP gains influence when it is unified, efficient, and passes legislation. In contrast with the UKHC, the committee stage comes before the plenary; therefore, compromises have been made and debate is limited, often to one-minute speeches. Instead of opposition, negotiation is practiced behind the scenes. MEPs make compromises with other groups. The plenary formally adopts positions already agreed in the parliamentary committees (Roger 2016). This efficiency can abstract from the detail of concrete social settings and representation and lead to a false polarization between expert/nonexpert MEP. The resolutions and voting sessions are separated, which reduces drama but allows MEPs to vote on more legislation in one sitting. In MEPs' offices, "voting lists" rather than the "weekly whip" reduce the partisanness of these parliamentary concepts.

Affective atmospheres that are antithetical to rationalization were observed in the fieldwork. In a political group meeting before the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, few MEPs could anticipate the atmosphere. MEPs predicted stunts from the Brexit Party, and so lyric sheets with UK-EU hearts were distributed. This plenary debate, which erupted in a chorus of "Auld Lang Syne," was highly immersive and revealed how affect structured the

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parliamentary workplace. This debate was preceded by an orchestra in the plenary to mark International Holocaust Memorial Day. There was a palpable affective atmosphere of graveness. Observing from the gallery revealed informal methods of communication such as women MEPs (UK, Brexit Party) making heart signs with their hands and blowing kisses[16] as a response to the perceived monopoly of affection to Europe from "remain"-supporting MEPs. During the debate, dressed in a red dress, MEP Jude Kirton Darling (UK, Labour) walked slowly up and down the left of the plenary distributing lyric sheets. The exemplary emotiveness of the plenary and affective displays of friendship and hugging was remarked upon in multiple data points, for example, a National Party Delegation meeting. Gender was entangled in these discussions. One MEP noted how he "cried like Gazza"[17] This challenged gender stereotypes, but the very discourse on emotion emphasized a politics of exception and a rupture from the norm. Indeed, many parliamentary actors commented upon on how quickly the parliament resumed normal business afterward.

Although there is not the same tradition of oratory in the EP, Euroskeptics have used the plenary as "public orators" (Brack 2017) who do not seek responsibility in the assembly but use the plenary as a platform to critique the EU. Public orators are "guided by a taste for anti-conformism and an attitude of frontal opposition" (Brack 2017, 176). Ethnography showed how the plenary was used by populist actors in embodied performances, such as wearing national flags on socks and ties. Gender is made meaningful in contrasts between feminized "worthy" causes and "hooligan," "lively" exchanges:

> [They] speak for a minute, on motherhood and apple pie, basically. Everything is terribly worthy. Nothing ever really goes anywhere. Except if it's the Commission and we've come and we've behaved a bit like a bunch of hooligans and it's livened the place up.[18]

The plenary was also used by feminist political actors. The Left group's political group co-chair, MEP Manon Aubry, drawing on her activist background, dressed as Rosie the Riveter for an International Women's Day debate,[19] recalling the names of women killed by men from a scroll that spilled over her desk. Therefore, some MEPs harness the public communication function of a debating parliament to humanize the working parliament[20] and make it more relevant to civil society, indeed simultaneously to the practice of MP Jess Phillips in the U.K. Parliament.

Gender Hierarchies

Ethnography showed how these spaces operated "on" parliamentary actors in gendered ways. Instead of deliberation, parliamentarians passing legislation is prioritized in the plenary chamber. This rationalization is inherently hierarchical because it considers only one goal, neglecting others. The "good" parliamentarian obtains or shadows dossiers, which are then presented and voted on in the parliamentary chamber. This leads to a decentralization of tasks to coordinators and rapporteurs according to expertise. For some actors, this rationalization, high volume of work, and division of labor led to neutral meritocratic treatment.

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However, rationalization is not gender-neutral (Goldmann 1999). In contrast with the UKHC, where backbench time is allocated by the Speaker, the allocation of most speaking time is proposed by the Conference of Presidents (Rule 171) by taking into consideration that members with disabilities might need more time. Within groups, it is then organized by group leaders and the political groups' secretary generals. Men have been overrepresented in these political and administrative leadership positions (Kantola and Miller 2022). Within groups, speaking time is allocated rigidly by institutional position, such as rapporteur. Generalist debates are more competitive for speaking time and COVID-19 increased MEPs' requests for speaking time to provide visibility.[21] For some, the rationalization of the plenary prohibited macho cultures:

> In Westminster when you stand on your feet you're speaking for, potentially ten minutes or longer there is the opportunity for people to heckle and be quite in-your-face and challenging . . . confrontational and testosterone-fueled. The European Parliament works differently. Speeches are much shorter and you tend to have longer discussions and debates in your group or in your delegation, where everyone is treated very much with respect without that kind of macho atmosphere. It's a much more respectful conversation.[22]

While rationalization denotes fair treatment, an MEP attributed disparities in speaking time to social class: "educated people do lots of talking. And the rest of us just sit there to listen"[23]; a Greens/EFA (European Free Alliance) MEP highlighted how she was unhappy with the allocation of speaking time. She stressed that when men are scheduled to speak first, women do not contribute, if they had no original content to add:

> When Ursula von der Leyen was presenting her speech . . . we had a really serious imbalance within the group of speakers, seven out of ten speaking slots were given to men."[24]

Even with speaking time allocated according to expertise, women MEPs have their expertise questioned in the plenary. An example took place during a blue card request. By waving a blue card and the speech giver and chair accepting it, a member can intervene for half a minute at the end of another's speech (Corbett, Jacobs, and Neville 2016, 232). However, the debate is arguably only between two MEPs. In his request to intervene in the speech of MEP Molly Scott Cato, a professor of economics, a man, Robert Rowland MEP, questioned her economic qualifications: "As far as I'm aware, she does not have any degree in economics"[25] Therefore, rationalization in speaking time is impeded by sexism.

Rationalization is interwoven with modernity. Although MEPs have modern, high-tech voting machines at their desks, the physical and cognitive exhaustion of long voting sessions was noted.[26] A woman MEP said,

> In the plenaries . . . when we're all formally voting and some of them do it at absolute breakneck speed. It almost becomes a performance and the women are just kind of calm more sensible when chairing those sessions."[27]

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Furthermore, voting lists are compiled by (shadow) rapporteurs where reports are voted on, or amendments line by line in the plenary. In line with the distinction in Table 1 between "parliamentarians" and "legislators," an accredited parliamentary assistant remarked on her boss's unease towards integrating into the parliamentary practices of the working parliament:

> A lot of MEPs are policymakers. They examine words, they examine lines. X is a *politician.* She sees the bigger picture, how citizens will see it, through the media. . . . She doesn't care about this word, that word . . . She says "Okay you see report on women's rights, you're gonna vote for it . . . citizens will see you voted against something on women's rights."[28]

Rationalization is not gender-neutral for another reason. Feminists have highlighted affect as a motivational source. However, the disappointment in the plenary chamber was voiced in strong affective language from across the political spectrum: "Almost everyone said like, the plenary is depressing"[29]; "I find it awful so far. There is no debate in plenary, which is a shame for me."[30] Another said that the plenary is "quite traumatic for me . . . the plenary it's actually a disaster."[31] Others described it as "profoundly dull, tedious, pointless":

> People were just getting up one after the other, very often making the same speeches, whereas [in] Westminster, people are very engaged in the merits or demerits of arguments . . . Compared to Westminster . . . it's a European conference but it doesn't feel like a parliament."[32]

The introduction of blue cards in 2009 increased debate. However, in a National Party Delegation meeting, women raised the notion that populists behaved "like gangsters" to bend the terms of the parliamentary debate using these tools. Making or accepting a blue card could provide them with publicity. Ethnography revealed how women championed each other's chamber responses and refusals of blue cards[33] as a way of maintaining the cordon sanitaire around populists (Kantola and Miller 2021). Furthermore, a gender hierarchy was that the emotional labor to deal with rudeness in the plenary by public orators seemingly fell on women:

> A lot of the posturing and verbal diarrhea is male but a lot of the attempts to heal divisions and keep dialogues open has been done by women. Vice President Mairead McGuinness has been a very good chair when she's chaired these debates."[34]

Rationalization is not gender-neutral for a third reason. Ethnography provided insights into how the priority on efficiency, rather than what is excessive, placed hierarchies between practical and emotional responses:

> A[n] MEP (man) anticipates the Greece/Turkey border plenary debate . . . I know how this will go. We'll hear a competition of statements: "it's unbearable . . . " He shouts across the room that the most practical thing the group can ask for is to unblock the asylum package and create humanitarian

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> corridors. He critiques routinization in the plenary: "Who can say things that are the most virtuous?" He prefers letters, initiatives and parliamentary means to a competition of rhetoric.
>
> A woman MEP shakes her hands: "look at ourselves. There is disbelief in this political family that we are indifferent to human suffering" . . . She turns and slams the microphone off. A chair of the meeting acknowledges the MEP's passion but pleads: "please don't say that the X group is not sensitive to this . . . The job has to be organized to allow people to speak and agree on what initiatives might come forward."[35]

Unlike in the UKHC, accountability is blurred since legislative compromises are made more frequently between political groups. The balance between exposure and cooperation can be an uneven affective burden and creates weariness. A Renew woman MP was critical of shielding the EPP (European People's Party) group so that it wouldn't "blow a resolution up," saying, "Let's dare them, let's push them to a vote."[36] MEPs can be compromised, particularly when having to conceal a "misogynistic" group. Alternatively, shadowing found that committee compromises could be achieved through affective homosocial discussions of shooting and land ownership.[37]

Gender Redress

At an institutional level, gender redress included gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is, as Woodward (1999, 133) notes, supposedly "rational" in terms of aiming to reach goals "in a more effective manner." However, in one shadowing placement, two EPP women were incredulous at who was in charge of gender mainstreaming, and gender mainstreaming can be critiqued by Euroskeptics who regard it as Brussels bureaucracy. The so-called blokey[38] AFCO committee (Committee on Constitutional Affairs) considers the Rules of Procedure. Where gender is peppered into political group statutes, participants were overly optimistic about coverage for example around speaking time.[39] Questors in the EP's bureau decide on the interpretation of procedural aspects which leaves a space for subjective "smart distinctions."[40] Groups' statutes can lead to an amplification of perceived coverage and adherence:

> Basically everywhere, it's in the statute of the Green Group that all the positions of power are distributed equally between men and women, and that we pay quite attention in everything we do, speaking time, the order of speakers . . . we always look at that there is equal representation."[41]

For one MEP who had very formal credentials (other MEPs may participate from unequal positions) and had been allocated files and questions in European Commission hearings, the newness of the EP deradicalized her approach to gender redress:

> Literally, this is what a world looks like that is gender equal. It's a very different cultural experience than Westminster. . . . EP . . . it's a newer

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> institution. So, I've often debated liberal and radical feminism and I think, I've been a liberal feminist all my life, maybe I should become a radical feminist to try and get rid of these institutions and start again . . . build something better. I don't know . . . I didn't feel discriminated against or disadvantaged.[42]

Feminist MEPs pursued gendered speaking time as an issue at their group meetings. In contrast with the reform of the UKHC chamber, reform to debate was not sought by a gender equality group. Rather than redressing inequalities, it was framed as creating a "rather administrative change of the debating culture."[43] Discussing the rationalization, a MEP said, "The speeches are carved up into these tiny chunks, but the blue cards allowed a bit more fluidity."[44] In order to challenge the dominant ways of experiencing this chamber, young MEPs built a coalition and "hijacked" a debate on January 15, 2020, and "pushed the rules of procedure to their limits."[45] This redress was framed as a creative exploitation of existing rules and was sought by "young and mainly newly elected members . . . able to move things within the different groups . . . to provide a different viewpoint on already long established habits . . . all of them expected much more from the European Parliament."[46]

However, by not thinking through equality analyses of parliamentary voting systems, parliamentary reformers in the EP risk reinforcing some inequalities, such as the need to attend the chamber physically to vote. On the other hand, redress sought through further rationalization could consider more broadly what the logical democratic limits are to rationalizing rationalization in the EP, whether it leads to permanent improvement and whether rationalization means the same for differently situated gendered parliamentary actors.

Conclusions

This article has considered ways to put the "parliamentary" in parliamentary ethnographies of gender, gender hierarchies, and their redress by placing these meanings in distinct parliamentary traditions. The UKHC and EP are typical "debating" and "working" parliaments, respectively. As mentioned, there are at least four dimensions to this distinction. This article focused on only one dimension, the plenary; other dimensions can be compared. This is not the only typology that can be engaged. However, this analytical distinction provided a sharpened focus on the interlocking activities related to dimensions of chamber activities and management. Overall, this focus provides a more coherent story about the distinctive gendered cultures in the U.K. House of Commons and the European Parliament and how parliamentary settings and priorities impact on gendered actors as they perform their parliamentary duties.

Parliamentary ethnography provides novel insights into the construction of gender, gender hierarchies, and their redress in these different parliaments. In the UKHC, *gender* was produced through other-worldliness, oratory, and opposition in the material setting. In the EP, it was produced through rationalization. In the UKHC, *gender hierarchies* were created through narratives of tradition that,

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seemingly, constrained MPs, while in the EP, they were produced through the priority on efficiency in the chamber. In the UKHC, resistance to methods of *redress* were political, as feminist actors needed to show fidelity to traditions. In the EP, faith in the coverage and implementation of gender mainstreaming meant that collective reform of the plenary chamber and the practices inside it was degendered.

What does parliamentary ethnography tell us about the distinction between a debating parliament and a working parliament? Parliamentary ethnography allows researchers to follow this distinction in the wider parliamentary settings. Analysis of the two plenaries suggest that this distinction is valuable, at least as a normative referent—and is fought against in the EP by populist actors. However, both parliaments were in flux. The possibility of a UKHC House Business Committee, the UKHC Restoration and Renewal project, an EP Right of Initiative, the fate of the Spitzencandidatur process, proposals following the Conference on the Future of Europe, and adaptation to the post-COVID-19 environment may change the debating and working parliaments. To return to Abels's (2019) reflections on the movement of gender as different parliamentary functions are strengthened, thick analyses of gender, gender hierarchies, and their redress can explore, in lived details, the power relationships inherent in these developments.

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Notes

1. The U.K. Parliament consists of four nations: Scotland, Wales, England, and Northern Ireland.
2. Welsh is recognized as a language in the UKHC. The South African and Indian parliaments are also multilingual.
3. I use the term "parliament" to describe any type of elected, representative body. For example, in the U.S. context, Carey and Shugart (1992) address the presidential-parliamentary dichotomy by calling Congress an assembly.
4. Interview 1, Woman MP, July 16, 2014, London.
5. Interview 2, Man DCCS member, May 1, 2014, London.
6. Mordaunt HC Deb, June 4, 2014, Volume 582 c.7.
7. Watson HC Deb, July 7, 2010, c486.
8. Dakin HC Deb, July 6, 2010, c244.
9. Interview 1, Woman MP, July 16, 2014, London.
10. Interview 3, Woman MP, July 18, 2014, telephone.
11. Interview 4, Woman MP, July 23, 2014, London.
12. Interview 5, Woman MP, July 8, 2014, London.
13. Interview 1, Woman MP, July 8, 2014, London.
14. Interview 4, Woman MP, July 23, 2014, London.
15. Interview 4, Woman MP, July 23, 2014, London.
16. Fieldnote 1, Debate on the United Kingdom's Withdrawal from the European Union, January 29, 2020, Brussels.
17. Fieldnote, National Party Delegation Meeting, January 30, 2020, Brussels.
18. Interview 7, NI MEP F 280120, Brussels.

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19. Fieldnote 1, European Parliament, International Women's Day Plenary Debate, March 10, 2020, Brussels.
20. Fieldnote 2, GUE/NGL Group Meeting, February 11, 2020, Strasbourg.
21. Interview 8, Renew, Group Staff M 120221, Brussels.
22. Interview 9, Renew MEP M 131219, National City.
23. Interview 10, EFDD MEP M 290119, Brussels.
24. Interview 11, Greens/EFA MEP F 300919, Brussels.
25. European Parliament: Preparation of the European Council meeting of December 12–13, 2019, Debate 261119.
26. Fieldnote 3, ECR Group Meeting, 051218, Brussels.
27. Interview 12, Greens/EFA MEP F 250220, Brussels.
28. Interview 13, EPP APA F, (06.03.20), Brussels.
29. Interview 14, Renew APA M 130320, Skype, Brussels.
30. Interview 15, Greens/EFA MEP F 130320, Brussels.
31. Interview 16, I&D MEP M 130320, Brussels.
32. Interview 7, NI MEP F 280120,Brussels.
33. Fieldnote 4, National Party Delegation Meeting, 300120, Brussels.
34. Interview 23 Greens/EFA MEP F 190319
35. Fieldnote 5, Political Group Meeting 030320, Brussels.
36. Fieldnote 6, Renew Working Group Meeting 050220, Brussels.
37. Fieldnote 7, Shadowing ENF, 040220, Brussels.
38. Interview 17, S&D MEP F 270120, Brussels.
39. Interview 18, S&D Group Staff M 260220, Brussels.
40. Fieldnote 8, GUE/NGL Group meeting 110220.
41. Interview 19, Greens EFA MEP M 030320, Brussels.
42. Interview 20, S&D MEP F 200220 Brussels; see also Interview 21, ECR MEP F 210219 Brussels.
43. Interview 22, Greens/EFA APA M 250321, Zoom, Tampere.
44. Interview 23, NI MEP F 270120, Brussels.
45. Interview 22, Greens/EFA APA M 250321, Zoom, Tampere.
46. Interview 22, Greens/EFA APA M 250321, Zoom, Tampere.

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