Putting the "I" in claims – Women as representative claim makers in the European Commission

By Darius Ribbe

Abstract:

Commissioners of the European Commission regularly issue representative claims on behalf of women. So far, scholars do not know much about the underlying patterns in this case and which Commissioners make women visible. To approach representative performances by individual Commissioners, I build on from Representative Claim theory, measuring claim-making on behalf of women. I develop the expectations, that women Commissioners make more representative claims then men Commissioners, especially in portfolios associated with feminine stereotypes. I test these expectations through a representative claim analysis to a corpus of 15,000 speeches by European Commissioners from 1986 to 2021, quantitative content analysis, and regression analyses on the representative-claim-making. First, I find that women Commissioners are significantly more likely than men to claim to represent women. Second, if they do so, the claim-making patterns are gendered, women Commissioners more often refer to "feminine" portfolios or topics then their men colleagues. I contribute to the literature on women´s representation in the EU, by confirming that women make women visible, which is especially important in light of the Commission´s function as agenda setter.

Introduction

The European Union constitutes the political system for 446 million people, of which more than 50% are women. Yet, only 40,4% of Members of European Parliament and 44% of Commissioners in the European Commission are women – record numbers for both institutions. Nevertheless, trust in this political system has been decreasing and women perceive their representation in the European Union as unsatisfactory (Schäfer and Zürn 2021). The European Union has a perceived gender equality and representation problem (Kantola 2010), which decreases the legitimacy of its institutions (Murdoch, Connolly, and Kassim 2018). Despite these developments, the EU champions itself as a proactive force that enhances gender equality in its neighbourhood and Member States (Woodward and Vleuten 2014). European institutions were at the heart of increasing women´s representation in policy-areas such as labour-market, employment rights, and equal treatment in the past decades (MacRae 2010). The European Commission is involved in the ordinary legislative procedure[1] and as the agenda setter of the policy-making process. The European Commission engages not only in its policy-making functions, but Commissioners also frequently fulfil representative functions through (e.g.) speeches to selected audiences. These bear important information about their policy preferences, personal views, and emphasis. In light of the growing political functions of the European Commission, we should care about its public communication (Rauh 2022).

In this paper, I argue that the speeches made by Commissioners also contain information on the representativeness of the European Commission. In their speeches, Commissioners issue representative claims – claims to act in the interest of someone/some group –, with which they can link their still administrative and distant institution to political processes, claim representative functions within the inter-institutional balance, and contribute to the acceptance of the EU system by its citizen. This constructivist turn in representative politics (Guasti and Geissel 2019a) is especially fruitful for analysing representation in supranational settings. By conceptualising the idea of the representative claim as non-static, (Saward 2006, 2010, 2020), representation can be "performed" independently from structural competences, democratic mandates, or inter-institutional competences – which in the EU system remain conflictual to this date.

Given the limited legislative functions, this form of representation is one of the most powerful political tools in the Commission´s toolbox. Women are still the largest marginalised group in

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[1] The Ordinary Legislative Procedure is the "general rule for passing legislation at EU level" (European Parliament 2023) between the European Commission (agenda setter), the European Parliament (supranational institution), and the Council of the EU (intergovernmental institution) (Article 294 TFEU).

the European Union despite the claims of the European Commission to champion gender equality. Therefore, analyses of the representative performance of the European Commission are needed. If the European Commission continues the transition from an administrative body to a fully politicised actor, to understand how its members use their representative functions is important to understand the Commissions relationship with EU citizen and other institutions. The European Commission – in line with its gender mainstreaming approach – engages in representative claim-making on behalf of women across all issues and policy-fields, regardless of their "genderdness". However, what drives representative claim-making on behalf of women by European Commissioners still remains unknown. Drawing from the politics of presence argument, by which those without a voice demand the representation of their preferences, by members of their group (Phillips 1995), I aim to answer the following question:

Who is representing Women in the European Commission?[2]

To answer this question, I analyse a dataset of over 15,000 speeches made by European Commissioners. I aim to identify representative claims on behalf of women in speeches by different Commissioners over time, starting from 1986 to 2021. I argue, that claim-making patterns vary, depending on personal characteristics of the Commissioners, foremost their sex. If women represent women, they – in this case – also are the makers of representative claims on behalf of women. This stands in contrast with the club-spirit of the European Commission, in which Commissioners decide unanimously, and to the idea, that Commissioners are just agents of the (and especially their) Heads of State or Government. Rather, I hypothesise, that men Commissioners are rather reluctant in making these claims in comparison to women Commissioners. Further, I divide the portfolios of Commissioners into three categories, to show, that the expected and confirmed gendered claim-making patterns persist across gendered portfolios. This expectation holds true for an EU specific classification of portfolios, which hints at the large parallelises between the European Commission and national governments. The speech acts of the European Commission are more personalised than the administrative content makes believe. To test, if these patterns are influenced by the growing politicisation of the European Commission and the growing share of women Commissioners, I test the developments of claim-making over time. Additionally, I hypothesise women to issue more

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[2] This first exploratory question will be further refined to also grasp dynamics and reactions in claim-making patterns.

representative claims in name of the European Commission as an institution rather than making themselves the centre of the claim. Whilst I expect men Commissioners to construct themselves as the subject of their claims, because men politicians are found to be more self-centred and drawn to attention.

Thereby, this paper also speaks to the discussions around gender-mainstreaming in the European Commission, through which the Commission and its members aim to include women´s issues and preferences, whenever they act, prepare legislation, or set agenda´s in the ordinary legislative procedure especially (O'Connor 2014; Lombardo and Meier 2006). I argue, that with the limited toolset of the European Commission, gender-mainstreaming includes for Commissioners to make women visible in their speeches and address them through representative claims on their behalf.

With this analysis, I then broaden the understanding of gendered dynamics of the representation of women in the EU and the representative performance of men and women in (quasi-)governments in two important ways. First, I show that women engage more extensively in women´s representation in one of the top-institutions of the European Union, with very limited access and available positions (one per Member State). This highlights the importance of gender balanced nomination and appointment processes for a sufficient substantive representation of women by the European Commission.

Literature and theoretical approach

This study aims to explain what determines Commissioners claim making. I know from the literature, that women MPs are likelier to speak "for women" (Clayton, Josefsson, and Wang 2017) than their male colleagues. Based on shared experiences with other women (Mansbridge 1999), their representative performance is different from MPs who do not share these experiences – their political actions differ (Phillips 1995). In theory, "substantive outcomes for women [improve] in every polity", if descriptive representation of women is increased (Mansbridge 2005: 622). However, In this regard, not only the message, but also the person who delivers the message is important (Catt 2003). Women are not only women, the electorate and political actors perceive actions to be "for women" (Lovenduski and Norris 2003). This point of view is strengthened, when legislators are directly asked after their role of surrogate representatives, where women claim representative relationships to other women more often than men (for an overview: Taylor-Robinson 2014). This theoretical framework is already translated to the European Union's political system. Not only voice women MPs their claim on

(better) representing women in the European Parliament (Pristed Nielsen and Rolandsen Agustín 2013), they also claim for women to fall victim of men-made crises and policies. However, this approach demands a definition of women´s interests and preferences, which creates the problem of homogenizing a diverse group of people (Grey 2006). From an outside perspective, this can lead to mischaracterization of "women´s interest" or to loosing women´s preference diversity (Smooth 2011). In the specialized EU context, where labour policies can be in the interest of women, especially, the field of "women´s issues" proved to be volatile (Celis et al. 2008).

Following, research has focused on the importance of "critical mass" and "critical actors" for the representation of women (Childs and Krook 2009). In critical mass theory, women gain influence in policy making and therefore ability for substantive representation, when they surpass their status as "token individuals" (ibid. 126) and grow into a "critical mass". However, critical mass theory does not always enables to explain real life representation (Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Mattioli 2015; Dingler, Kroeber, and Fortin-Rittberger 2019). Therefore, attention did shift to "critical actors", and to specific actions of individuals, rather than numbers of representatives. Critical Actors are not by definition female, feminist or left-wing (Childs and Krook 2009: 138), but are defined by a low threshold of political action.

As women seldom act on their own, a newer branch of this research has given attention to the representation of women´s interest by men from different points of view. For example Höhmann and Nugent (2022) find the importance of electoral incentives to influence men-representation of women´s interest, which is not relevant in the context of the European Commission, as positions are not elected but nominated by national governments. However, Höhmann (2020) finds, that men legislators react to increases in the share of women legislators be retrenching their engagement with women´s representation, which could possibly also be the case within the European Commission. Kroeber (2022) also finds that men legislators retrench from speaking about women in regard to women´s issues with more women in their party parliamentary group. On "issues linked to men´s traditional role in society" (ibid. 10), men MPs increased the number of times they speak about women, which points to a more policy-dependent effect.

Bringing together these two approaches, I first state, that the representation of women on the EU level, still takes place in male dominated political system, that meets the stereotypical ideas about how men should/can and women should not/cannot behave (Kronsell 2005). European

integration is and was male-cantered – and where not, scholars often create a master narrative by writing out influential women (Abels and MacRae 2021) – with "most powerful actors in the EU [being] men" (Lombardo and Kantola 2021: 47). I expect the created male-norm, which is only slowly challenged by women in elected- and higher office such as the European Commission, to still influence representative behaviour up to the highest level, without being deconstructed on a large scale (see e.g. Lombardo and Meier 2006). The main policy focus of the EU remains economically and financially dominated, with the coordination of the single market and as a watchdog of the EU treaties. Further, Member States limit supranational competences in questions of gender equality to discussions about labour laws or more general norms and values.

Women are not only underrepresented in EU institutions, but policy-making at the EU-level lacks gender awareness (Abels and Mushaben 2012), despite ambitious claims of for example the European Commission. Following, "male-centred institutional practices" (Lovenduski 2005: 27) constitute the European political sphere (Haastrup and Kenny 2015), which in turn shapes the working environment of the Commissioners of the European Union. I argue that these circumstances lower the attention non-affected members of the Commission assign to women´s issues, as women remain invisible in the proclaimed genderless administrative of the Commission´s day-to-day work.

I therefore expect:

> *H1: Women Commissioners have a higher likelihood of making representative claims on behalf of women in their speeches and assign more importance to women´s visibility by making these claims more often (H1).*

In addition, the portfolios to which European Commissioners are assigned to, might have an influence of the representative claim-making performance. In general, issues such as childcare, health, family, and anti-discrimination are labelled "soft policies", which are seen as classical "women´s issues" (Krook and O'Brien 2012: 846). The portfolio assignment in the early colleges of the European Commission followed these gendered patterns. More publicly or "hard" policy fields are in contrast often labelled as "masculine", with neutral portfolios in between. This divide is criticized for the exclusion of the private sphere which associated with women, whereby it is reproducing patriarchal norms (Squires 2018). Further, the policy positions of men and women differ on a broad variety of issues, including not only "women's issues". For the European Commission in particular, this public-private divide does not hold

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true entirely, as some portfolios and issues were reclaimed by women Commissioners early on. Budget, foreign affairs, competition, and justice (Hartlapp, Müller, and Tömmel 2021) were and are so to say women´s domain´s in the context of the European Commission. These women´s domains do not differ substantially from national portfolios in terms of content but are limited by EU competences with the Member States´ veto powers. Rather, they have been shaped by women Commissioners recurringly, with these women using their competences

Nevertheless, I expect the effects of H1 to be moderated by their nesting in different categories of EU-portfolios and therefore hypothesise:

> *H2: The gendered patterns of representative claim-making (H1) are nested in different portfolio categories, which moderate the effect of the Commissioners sex.*[3]

The European Commission as an under-researched representative actor in the EU system
To analyse these questions, the EU with the European Commission is an interesting, yet special case. The European Union is seen to have a democratic deficit (Follesdal and Hix 2006), whereas its citizen feel not represented by its institutions or its policies (Schäfer and Zürn 2021). Representation in international institutions is flawed due to many reasons, not least their institutional architecture (Marsh and Norris 1997). However, studies have focussed on the responsiveness of EU institutions towards citizen preferences (as a link to representation in international setting (Kuper and Kuper 2004)), which varying results. Some scholars find the EU institutions and actors in its political system to become less responsive (especially in crisis situations) (Clements, Nanou, and Real-Dato 2018) or only partially less responsive depending on who voices the preferences, for example to the European Women´s Lobby (Judge and Thomson 2019). Others, however, find that EU institutions are responsive for politicised issues (De Bruycker 2020). These inconclusive findings show the high context dependency when analysing responsiveness on the European Union level. Council and European Parliament have relatively high degrees of responsiveness on policy issues (Wratil 2018; Zhelyazkova, Bølstad, and Meijers 2019). As the only directly elected institution, the European Parliament, has

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[3] In later iterations of this paper, I will add hypotheses on gendered differences in issuing institutional representative claims – which have the European Commission rather than the Commissioner as Subject of the claim (Salvati 2021). The expectation is that men Commissioners have different personality traits that result in them issuing more claims referring to them, rather than the institution. Further, a hypothesis on the change of claim-making patterns will be added, to show how claim-making patterns change with growing share of women in the European Commission, from when they were only two, or one Commissioner, and later, when they reached a critical mass.

received vast scholarly attention regarding the representation of citizens interests (Kröger and Friedrich 2016; Pukelsheim 2016; Murdoch, Connolly, and Kassim 2018).

However, representation research has long side-lined the European Commission, despite its central role in the ordinary legislative procedure. The European Commission is – so far – the only institution empowered to propose legislation and the closest the European Union has to a government. Its important functions in agenda setting, the policy making process, and the implementation of the Union´s policies support its strong governance claims (Shore 2011). In recent years, members of the European Commission have additionally claimed a more political or strategic role for their institution (Kassim and Laffan 2019), which was long seen as a mere agent of Member State´s governments (Majone 2005; Eckhardt and Wessels 2018). This falls in line with institutionalist analyses describing the own agenda of this former technocratic institution, and the trend of politicisation of European Union politics (Rauh 2019). Despite this, the European Commission has only a "weak" claim for responsiveness and the representation of peoples interest (Bellamy and Castiglione 2011), due to its position outside the electoral framework of the Union and the member states. The analysis of representative claims, however, which also engage with unelected representation (Saward 2009; De Wilde 2020), seem to overcome problems with analysing representation in international setting.

 So far, representative claims have only been analysed for the European Parliament (Kinski 2018, 2021; Kinski and Crum 2019), European integration (De Wilde 2011), or policy issues such as trade unions (Meardi, Simms, and Adam 2021). However, an institutional focus on the European Commission is still pending. I argue that representative claims are a suitable approach to understand representative performance in the EU system. However, the process of representative claim-making is subject to similar dynamics as taking part in parliamentary debate or substantive representation by policy change and takes place in the masculinist institutional setting of the EU system (Kronsell 2005).

The constructivist turn in representative politics (Guasti and Geissel 2019a) is especially fruitful for analysing representation in supranational settings. Thus, representation is not only acting for others (Sintomer 2013), say in Council or Parliament, but also making groups visible in the process by claiming to represent them and their interest. This action can be made by elected und unelected officials in various settings within and outside parliament, office, or protocol. European Commissioners deliver their speeches at multiple occasions, venues, and before varying audiences. Women are the largest societal group and yet remain marginalised in many political systems and the Member States of the European Union (EIGE 2022). The

Commissioners have addressed this issue regularly and claim to be gender equality champions within the EU system (MacRae 2010; Kantola and Lombardo 2018). In addition, the European Commission has formulated standards to which to hold itself responsible through the implementation of its own "gender mainstreaming approach" (Schmidt 2005) in 1996. The Commissioners aim to reflect on the implications of its actions across policy fields just ten years after the first women were appointed Commissioners. Thereby, the representative claims analysis approach solves methodological boundaries when analysing the European Commission, which in turns puts itself on the agenda of representation research by voicing its strong claim of being a gender equality champion and implementing its gender mainstreaming approach.

Research Design and Data

To test my hypotheses, I apply a representative claim analysis to a dataset of all speeches made by European Commissioners between 1986 and 2021. This initial dataset contains over 15,000 speeches. For this current version of the paper, I limit the data to 5,953 speeches from 2006 to 2021, thereby covering 5 Commission cycles (Commission Prodi, Commission Barroso I, Commission Barroso II, Commission Juncker, Commission von der Leyen).[4] I scraped the speeches from the European Commission's speech repository following the methods used by Rauh (2021).

For the representation of women in the European Commission, the Commission Prodi is an important tipping point, as "joint political and administrative female leadership date back as early as the Prodi Commission (Anna Diamantopoulou and Odile Quintin; Margot Wallström and Catherine Day; Michaele Schreyer and Edith Kitzmantel) and became more important with rising numbers of women at the top of the Commission" (Hartlapp and Blome 2021: 10). Further, the critical mass of roughly 30% women´s participation (Kanter 1977; Childs and Krook 2008) was first present in the Prodi Commission (28% Commissioners / 35% including heads of Directorate General) (Hartlapp, Müller, and Tömmel 2021). Prodi is the first Commission President, who emphasised the importance of women´s descriptive representation

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[4] This limitation is caused by data collection; however, the analysis of this later time period can be expected to yield first insights. At a later stage, I nevertheless aim for a complete dataset, as the transition from only men Commissioners (until 1989), over a very low share of women Commissioners with two in 1989 to 38% in 2019 promises additional insights in the change of women´s and men´s claim-making behaviour.

– at least in his public communication when he demanded women nominees from the Member States (MacRae 2012).

Dependent Variable: Representative Claims on behalf of women

Representative claims are performative acts of representation, by which a claim-maker claims for a subject – which is often the claim-maker – to represent an object by referring to a referent in front of an audience. Thereby, the subject is constructed as an entity which pursues the interests referred to by the claim-maker. In this case, I look at cases, in which European Commissioners claim to represent women on various issues in their speeches. This approach solves two sets of problems especially challenging when analysing representation in the European Union with a vast population of people from still heterogenous societies and the mentioned, highly complex political system. First, the approach does not require to define interest of groups which are represented – the group is constructed by the claim-making itself – and secondly, it does not require to measure if enacted policies play out in the interests of constituencies. The approach of representative claim analysis (De Wilde 2013), combines Saward´s theory with the method of claims analysis (Koopmans and Statham 1999) to develop a methodological toolset for descriptive analysis of representative claim making (Erzeel 2011; De Wilde 2012). Guasti and Geissel further develop a "framework […] that can be applied for systematic empirical analysis of real-life cases" (Guasti and Geissel 2019b: 98) by adding a new typology of assessable claims and comparing representative claims to claims of misrepresentation and claims of interest. The discursive judgement on the acceptance or rejection of representative claims by the constructed constituency is left out of analysis in this study (for a problematisation see Bellamy and Castiglione 2011).

To analyse the speeches, I scraped the European Commissions speech repository, following Rauh (2022). I cleaned and sorted the raw-documents by authors and language, as well as prepared the text for different kinds of analysis, by word-stem reduction for automated text-analysis or the identification of possible representative claims on behalf of women by application of a dictionary approach to pre-filter the texts. This means, that only word-stems remain in one text-variable, so that dictionary approaches find all iterations of words, independently from their function in sentences.

I identify speeches in the English dataset in which European Commissioners possibly claimed to represent women by using a dictionary approach on the word "woman" as well as relevant synonyms, or subgroups (e.g., daughters, sisters, wife, girls, mothers). I thereby excluded all speeches in which women were not explicitly mentioned, which limits my later data-set to explicit representative claims. Albeit Commissioners can make implicit references and send hidden messages, I argue that these speech acts are not relevant for the establishment of a representative relationship as much. In a second step, I hand-coded the results following the code-book from the Reconnect Project (Gora and De Wilde 2019) to identify representative claims including its elements (maker of the claim / subject / object / referent / audience).

For the first data assessment in this study, I will aggregate the data of the claim-making on behalf of women to a count and a dichotomous variable. Figure 1 shows the distribution of speeches with at least one representative claim on behalf of women in relation to all speeches in the dataset per year.

[Figure 1 about here]

I found, that 1653 (or about 14%) of all speeches in the dataset contained a claim on the representation of women by European Commissioners. Most speeches contained up to two representative claims (75%) with 99% covering the range from 1 to 9 and some outliers in which up to 23 representative claims were made in a single speech.

Full descriptive statistics of the used variables are provided in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

The content of these representative claims is less diverse than e.g. communication by high-level politicians. In line with a recent study by Rauh (2022) on the accessibility of European Commissions press releases, who finds the European Commission to be highly technocratic in its communication, speeches by European Commissioners are carefully crafted and contain little "out of the ordinary" as compared to speeches by e.g. the heads of state or government. Unsurprisingly, in the assessment of a randomly drawn sample (n=300) I haven´t found anti-

feminist representative claims, with feminist claims being defined as (reproductive rights, workplace equality, anti-discrimination).[5]

Independent Variable: Sex of Commissioners

Data on the sex of Commissioners was scraped from WikiData using the "tidywikidatar"-package for R (Comai 2022). The variable is binary, "0" if the Commissioner is a man and "1" if the Commissioner is a woman. No inter-sex Commissioners are known so far. In total, 52 women Commissioners (12.6% of the total of 412, including preceding institutions) have served, the earliest in 1989. The current analysis with data from 2004 until 2019 includes 39 women Commissioners.

Portfolio-Group

I include a categorial variable for three different sets of portfolios in my analysis. The allocation of portfolios for ministers (to which Commissioners might be the EU´s pendant), is a gendered process, still (Goddard 2019), which makes the portfolio a possible intervening variable. The overlap of "soft policies" and the assignment of women Commissioners has mostly been consistent with the underlying assumptions (Krook and O'Brien 2012: 846). However, with a rising share of women Commissioners, and the fluid framing of Commissioners portfolios, I make four notable exemptions (including effects from subordinate Directorate Generals): budget, foreign affairs, competition, and justice (Hartlapp, Müller, and Tömmel 2021). These portfolios are also assigned the label "feminine ascribed", as women Commissioners and administrators have successfully claimed this position repeatedly. Due to political decisions in favour of women´s descriptive representation by the Heads of State or Government and the Commission President, these portfolios were assigned to women Commissioners (Hartlapp, Müller, and Tömmel 2021: 136). For DG directors, this process, however, could not been observed as women directors were continuously assigned to "female" portfolios. An analysis with the "traditional" labelling following Krook and O'Brien (2012) is provided in the appendix.

Interaction Term

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[5] If I keep this, I will rework the definition and try to find a more systematic approach than this quick assessment, which comes from a comment at the workshop.

To be able to make statements on the effects of Commissioners sex on their claim-making behaviour, I include an interaction term for gender and portfolios. As more men Commissioners are assigned to "male" portfolios, a sole comparison would include respective issue/portfolio bias. Despite the European Commission claiming to follow a gender-mainstreaming approach, meaning that Commissioners refer to women´s preferences regardless of the topic at hand (Lombardo and Meier 2006; Schmidt 2005), we do not know if women or men Commissioners drive the mainstreaming of its policies.

Confounding Variables[6]

Commissioner Age

Demographic variables can function as proxies for socialization, values, or specific group interests. For once, especially younger men citizen tend to overestimate women´s representation and the relevant necessity for action (Burden and Ono 2020). Further, age can have an effect on political behaviour in U-shape, with similarities of the adolescent and old citizen (Watts 1999). I transfer the representation overestimation of young men to older men in case of the European Commission (the youngest person to serve was 41 years old), hypothesising that older Commissioners issue fewer representative claims on behalf of women. I calculated Commissioners' age at time of speech-making from birthdays scraped from WikiData.

Length of Speeches

Similarly to parliamentary floor time (Bäck and Debus 2019), the available time for giving a speech is scarce on most occasions, as is the attention devoted to such speeches (Bevan and Jennings 2014). European Commissioners fulfil various tasks in speeches, from identity formation, over information, to representation (Weiss 2002). I argue that speech length, has an influence on the likelihood and the number of representative claims on behalf of women being made.

Party ideology

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[6] I also hypothesize that having children have a positive effect of gendered claim-making patterns in regard to women and "women´s issues". Representative-claim making on behalf of women is closely tied to women´s (ascribed) role as mothers and care-takers (Celis et al. 2014). Further, especially on the political right, the national narrative of "having as many children as possible" (Heinisch and Werner 2019) often results in representative claims on behalf of women (as mothers). I scrape the data from WikiData but cannot determine at what point Commissioners became parents.

A vast set of literature engages in the effect of party ideology on women´s representation (Kalra and Joshi 2020; Keith and Verge 2018; Celis and Erzeel 2015; Erzeel and Celis 2009; Caul 1999; Wängnerud 2009). In the case of the European Commission, party politics does not play a role in day-to-day policy-making and administrative actions (Schout and Mijs 2015), as Commissioners try to keep their distance from party politics (Lord 2000). Yet, European Commissioners are nominated from their national governments and most often have made party career beforehand, and ambitious party-figures show interest in careers as Commissioners (Høyland, Hobolt, and Hix 2019). Therefore, party positions on women´s representation (for example) might also influence the claim-making of European Commissioners. I scrape the data on the party affiliation from WikiData and matched with Manifesto Data (Volkens et al. 2020).

Religion

European Commissioners are acting in a very tight set of institutional rules and with only limited room to manoeuvre. Nevertheless, their speeches express their priorities and emphasis for certain issues within or outside their portfolios. In previous studies, the negative correlation of Catholicism and women´s representation was established (Norris 1997; Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Tripp and Kang 2008). I also assume, that Catholicism of European Commissioners has a negative influence on the claim-making on behalf of women.[7]

Commission Dummy Variable

I include the Commission term as a control variable in my analysis, to avoid time and salience effects, as well as increased likelihood or attention caused by portfolios. I control for the Commission´s electoral cycle by including a categorial variable for the 5 Commissions in the data-set (Prodi, Barroso I-II, Juncker, von der Leyen). Thereby, I avoid effects of issue salience during discussions in society and external effects. Further, I keep the Commissioners within the portfolios stable, as they often change portfolios or are being replaced after an electoral cycle.

Empirical Analysis

The sex of Commissioners is statistically significant correlated with the likelihood and number of representative claims on behalf of women made, with women having a higher likelihood and amounts of claims made [positive Chi-Squared values with $p < 2.2e\text{-}16$]. To further test hypothesis 1, however, I also run a logistic regression as a generalized linear model (Table 2 in

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[7] With currently almost 90% missing values, this variable is not suitable for analysis as of now. I will gather further data from biographies at a later stage.

the Appendix, Model 1 and Model 2) with fixed effects for the Commission term.[8] To be a woman Commissioner remains positively and statistically significant correlation, with women being around 8 times as likely to issue representative claims than men. Age is significantly negative correlated with the likelihood of representative claims-making, where with each year the likelihood of claim-making on behalf of women drops by 13%. As expected, with longer speeches, the likelihood of claim-making also increases significantly. These results translate also to the number of claims made, with positive and significant effect sizes for sex and length (Table 4 in the Appendix). However, the direction of age changes and becomes only weak significant. I therefore can accept Hypothesis 1.

To approach Hypothesis 2, I run two separate multiplicative interaction models (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006), once for the dichotomous variable if representative claims on behalf of women are made or not, and once for the count variable of the number of claims made. I control for the term by including a dummy variable on the Commission cabinet. Further, I add the controls for demographics and speech meta-data. I display the effects of Commissioner´s sex on their representative claim-making in relation to their portfolio (1 = masculine, 2 = neutral, 3 = feminine) in the marginal effect plots in Figure 2 and Figure 3. The analysis bases on the portfolio labels by Hartlapp, Müller, and Tömmel (2021), which are specific for the EU context. An analysis with the categories by Krook and O'Brien (2012) is in the Appendix, Figure 1 and Figure 2. The general trend is consistent, however the findings of category 3 ("feminine" portfolios) are not interpretable, as the confidence intervals become too large due to a low number of cases (27 speeches in the current data set).

Based on these findings, I can accept Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, women are in fact on average more than 10% more likely to issue representative claims on behalf of women in the European Commission than their man colleagues across portfolios. Women Commissioners also make more representative claims on behalf of women across the different portfolio categories. A full table is available in the Appendix.

[Figure 2 and Figure 3 about here]

These women, put forward by their national governments and thereby politically appointed, which could partly explain their influence in "male" portfolios (Hartlapp, Müller, and Tömmel

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[8] Regression results without these fixed effects are provided in the Appendix, Table 3. The directions of effects remain, although their effect size increases.

2021), can redefine their portfolios to make women visible, regardless of topics. As this trend is likely time dependent, I further plot the marginal effects as a time series, to gather first evidence of changes in the claim making behaviour. This explorative analysis with limited data reveals the category 2 ("neutral") to be largely driven by a single women Commissioner in 2004-2010 (Barroso I), with a drastic change during the Barroso II Commission.[9]

This analysis, however, shows that women Commissioners have a great influence on their representative claim-making behaviour, rather than being subordinate to the work of their DGs. Despite men dominating the DGs assigned to budget, foreign relations, competition and justice, women Commissioners do make a difference in these portfolios, too. This shows, how women Commissioners are critical actors for women´s representation within the highly controlled environment of the European Commission's administration.[10]

Preliminary Conclusion

In this study, I analysed the representative claim-making on behalf of women by European Commissioners in dependency of their sex. Making use of a data set of over 15,000 speeches by European Commissioners (*the here presented preliminary analysis was done with a smaller subset*), I found that women Commissioners are likelier to make representative claims than their men colleagues, and if they do so, they voice more claims in a single speech. Thereby, women Commissioners make their women constituency visible more often and with greater emphasis. This confirms the politics of presence derived argument, that representation in the European Commission still follows gendered patterns.

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[9] I will address this outlier and the following change in following up qualitative case studies. Further, this plot shows a first trend of increasing engagement in representative claim-making by women, and a small decrease / no change in the behaviour of their man colleagues, hinting at a backlash (Höhmann 2020) towards the increasing influence of women Commissioners. I will follow this lead in later iterations of this work.

[10] To evaluate Hypothesis 3, I need to do further coding of the representative claims in the data set. Yet, to give an overview of the general claim-making activity of the European Commissioners, I drew a random sample from the dataset (n=300) and hand-coded the representative claims following the code-book from the Reconnect Project (Gora and De Wilde 2019). Commissioners in fact use institutional representative claims (Salvati 2021) where the European Commission acts as subject of the claims, constructed by "we". More than 60% of representative claims in the sample were made in name of the whole college or the institution, thereby Commissioners are devoting less attention to political conflict within the Commission, rather than to institutional effectiveness and their place in the inter-institutional balance of power. Further, women used the institutional representative claims more frequently than their man colleagues, however I could not identify any pattern regarding the representative claim-making on behalf of women yet. This analysis will be repeated with the full data set and a one-shot classifier with the following hypotheses: "Contains a personal "I/my" representative claim" / "Contains a non-personal "we/our/EC" representative claim". However, this classifier does not run, yet.

Whereas men Commissioners also engage in representative claim-making on behalf of women, their performance is much weaker in this regard. These findings hold true across differently gendered portfolios. The relevant representative claim-making behaviour of the college of Commissioners is in all portfolio-categories ("male", "neutral", "feminine") driven by women Commissioners. This allows to revaluate the effectiveness of the European Commission´s gender mainstreaming approach. Where previous analysis found the topic not to be a significant predictor of claim-making probability, and thereby confirmed the claims of the Commission, this study shows that women Commissioners act as critical actors in this regard.

This finding has important implications for the future nominations of European Commissioners. Women are the main claim-makers on behalf of women and drive the representativeness of the institutions. However, their presence in the European Commission depends still on the preferences and power of the Commission President, chosen by *Spitzenkandidaten* process (Edthofer and Schmidt 2021). It is the Commission President who has to accept the national nominations before the confirmation process starts, and who can effectively demand more women to be nominated as well as assign them to all categories of portfolios.

For future research, these preliminary findings set out the agenda for further iterations of this paper. These will include time sensitive analyses to capture dynamics of change in the claim-making behaviour, as men Commissioners react to the growing number of women Commissioners, as well as changing claim-making patterns in the same portfolio after elective cycle induced changes in Commissioners. Further, differences in institutionalized claim-making will be added to this paper.

Overall, the analysis of gendered patterns of representative claim-making in the European Commission can provide insights from a highly technocratic institution from its early days to an ever more politicised body in more recent times (Hartlapp 2015). With this trend, the European Commission is in line with its Member States' administrations. Further, the insights from this case can set the stage for further analysis within European national polities and comparisons between the Member States institutions as enactors of representation. Future analyses have to show, if these findings are comparable to national governments claim-making patterns. This helps to understand the position of the European Commission as a representative quasi-governmental institution or could lead to a more sui generis conceptualisation of representative dynamics in the EU system.

Tables and Figures

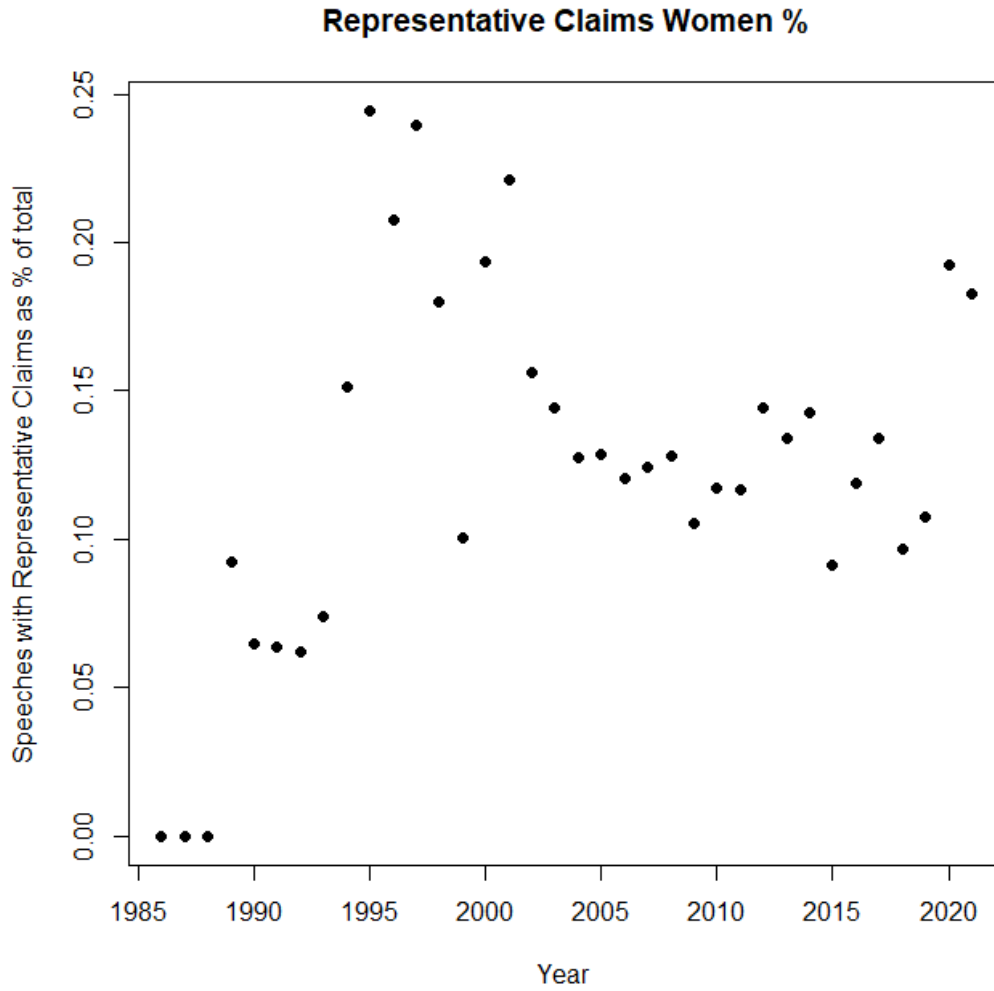*Figure 1: Representative Claims (dichotomous) in %*

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of variables in the analysis.

	Claim(Count)	*Length*	*Year*	*Age*	*Children*
Min.	0	196	2006	41.68	1.000
Median	0	1246	2012	56.77	1.000
Mean	0.115	1297	2012	60.34	1.152
Max.	23.000	5907	2014	73.18	3.000
N/A´s	0	0	0	0	7866

Sex	*Category*	*EU Category*	*Commission*	
Women: 3772	Masculine: 10465	Masculine: 6169	Barroso I:	1376
Men: 2107	Neutral: 2331	Neutral: 2331	Barroso II:	2886
	Feminine: 27	Feminine: 4323	Juncker:	973
			Prodi:	68
			Von der Leyen:	576

Figure 2: Effects of sex on likelihood of representative claim-making on behalf of women, based on multiplicative interaction model and logistic regression, with EU portfolio categories on the logistic variable
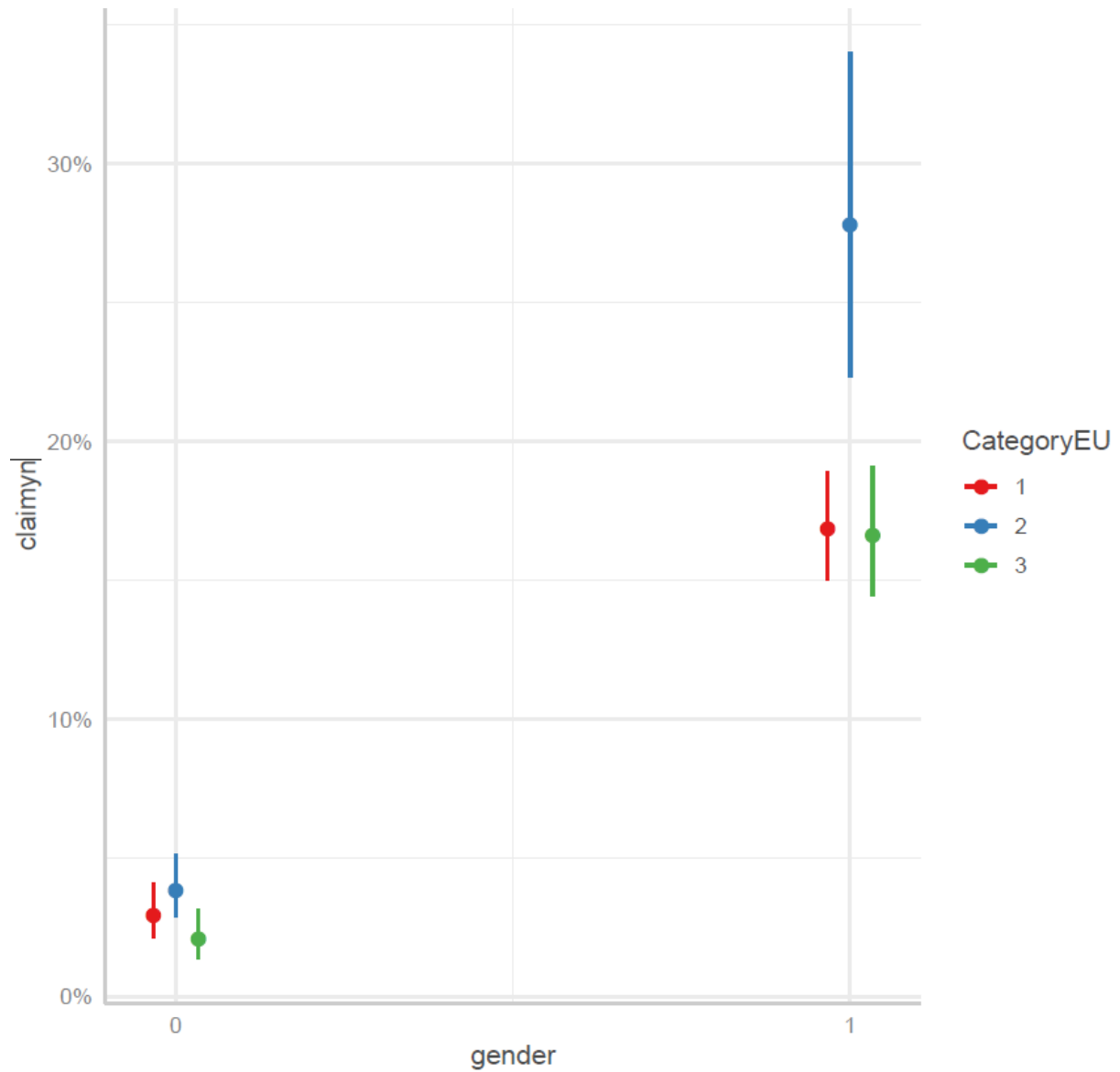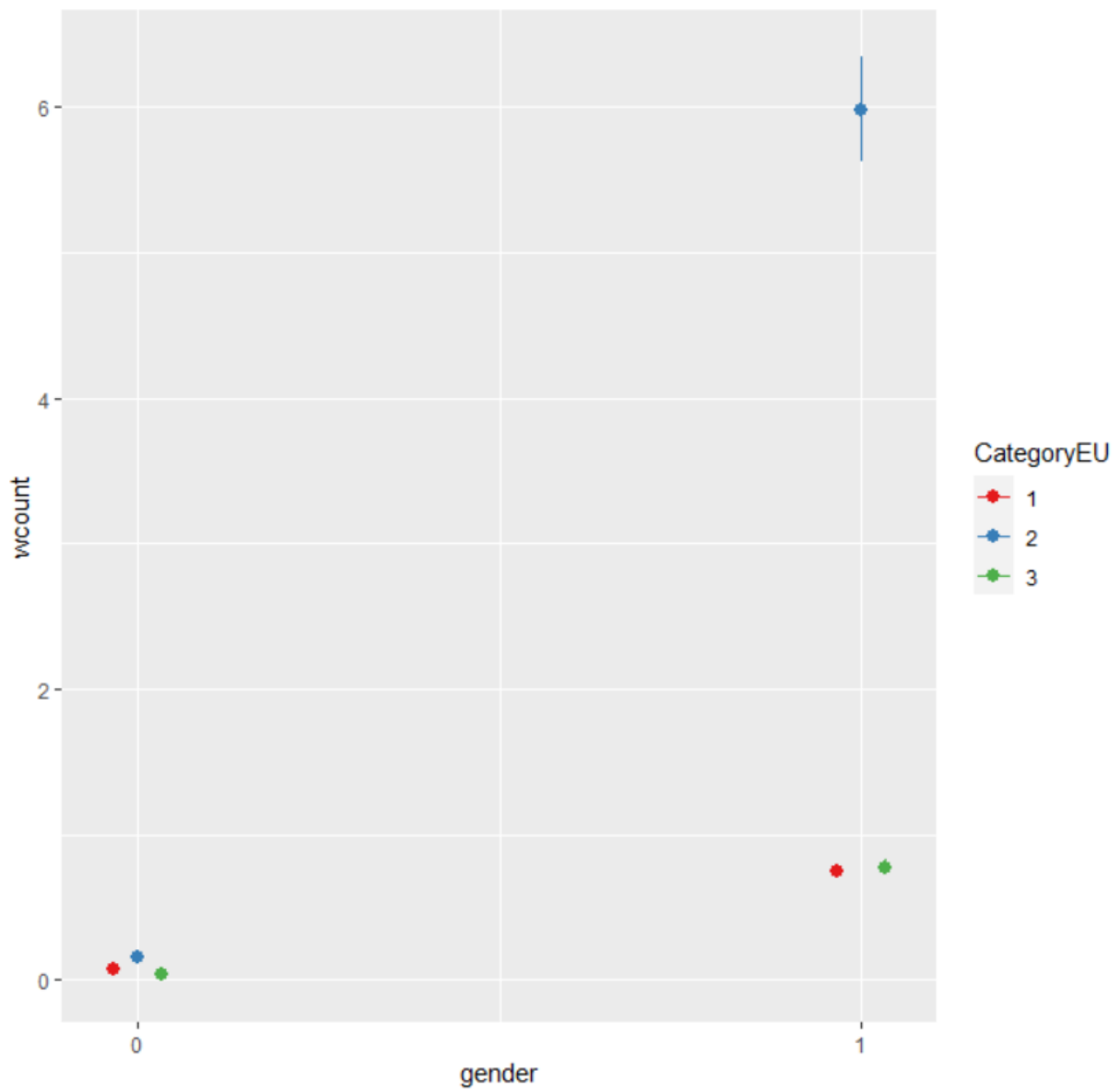

Gender = 0 – Man / 1 – Woman

Claimyn = Likelihood of Making a Representative Claim on behalf of Women

CategoryEU = 1 "male" Portfolio / 2 "neutral" Portfolio / 3 "feminine" Portfolio

Figure 3: Effect of sex on number of representative claims made by Commissioners based on multiplicative interaction model and poisson regression, with EU portfolio categories on the count variable.

Gender = 0 – Man / 1 – Woman

Wcount = Predicted Number of Representative Claims on behalf of Women made

CategoryEU = 1 "male" Portfolio / 2 "neutral" Portfolio / 3 "feminine" Portfolio

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APPENDIX

Figure 1: Analysis of sex effect (gender 0 – man / gender 1 – woman) with classical subset of portfolios male (1) /neutral (2) /feminine (3) – Dichotomous (claimyn)
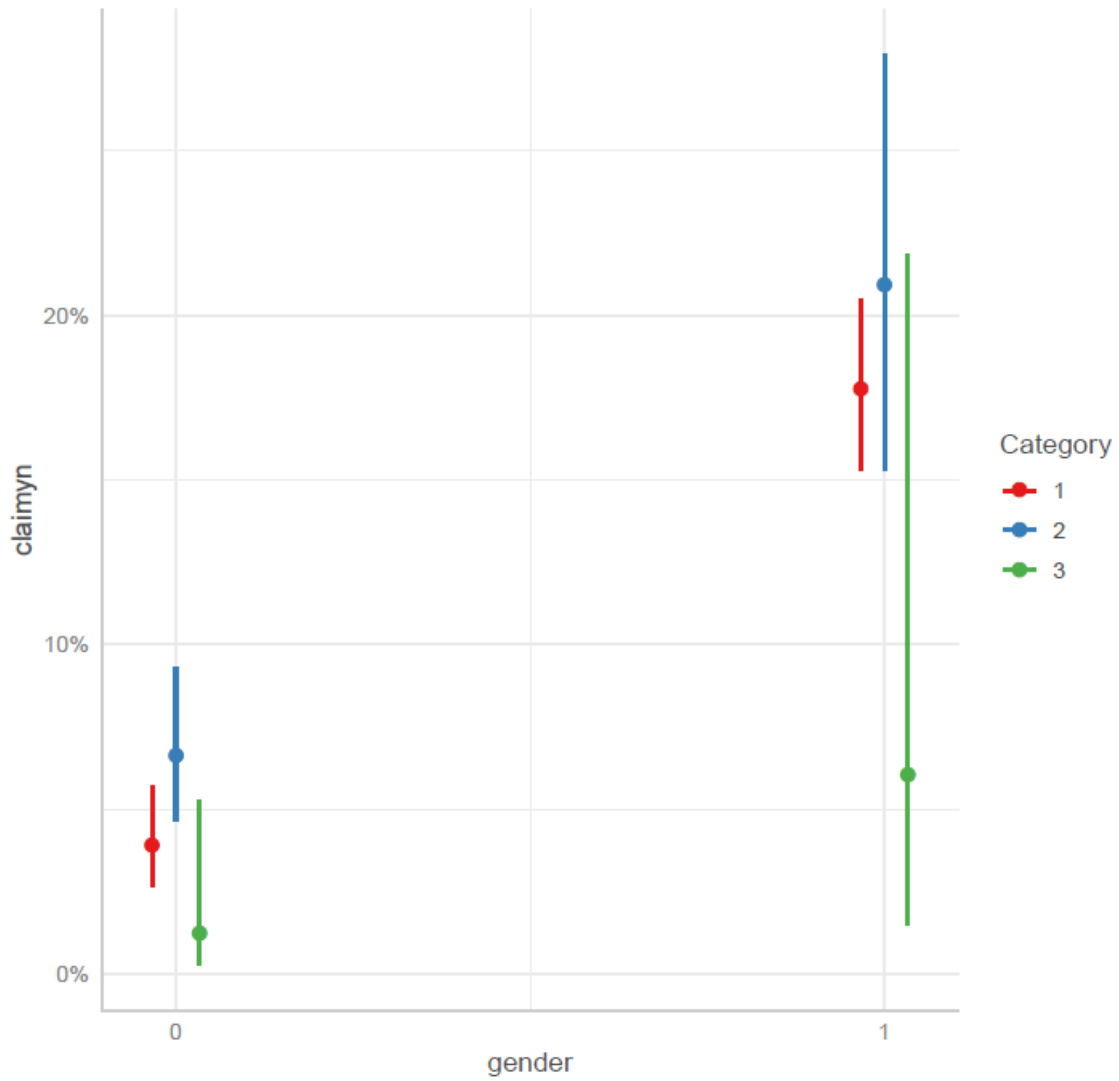
Table 2: Regression Table Generalized Linear Model with interaction term, with Commission-Dummy

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Intercept)	-3.68 ***	-3.66 ***	-3.63 ***	-3.48 ***
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.17)
gender1	2.11 ***	2.10 ***	2.05 ***	1.90 ***
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.17)
age	-0.13 ***	-0.12 **	-0.13 ***	-0.12 **
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
length	0.20 ***	0.20 ***	0.20 ***	0.20 ***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
CommissionBarroso II	-0.14	-0.15	-0.14	-0.14
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
CommissionJuncker	-0.37 **	-0.36 **	-0.35 **	-0.34 *
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
CommissionProdi	0.97 ***	0.97 ***	0.89 ***	0.88 ***
	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.24)
CommissionVon der Leyen	-0.76 **	-0.75 **	-0.75 **	-0.74 **
	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)
Category2	0.54 ***		0.42 *	
	(0.12)		(0.18)	
Category3	-1.17		-1.16	
	(0.75)		(0.75)	
CategoryEU2		0.53 ***		0.27
		(0.12)		(0.20)
CategoryEU3		-0.04		-0.36
		(0.07)		(0.25)
gender1:Category2			0.21	
			(0.24)	
gender1:CategoryEU2				0.37
				(0.26)
gender1:CategoryEU3				0.34
				(0.26)
N	12823	12823	12823	12823
AIC	7450.54	7453.55	7451.78	7454.87
BIC	7525.13	7528.14	7533.83	7544.38
Pseudo R2	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15

All continuous predictors are mean-centred and scaled by 1 standard deviation. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table 3: Regression Table Generalized Linear Model with interaction term, without Commission-Dummy

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Intercept)	-4.16 ***	-4.15 ***	-3.95 ***	-3.77 ***
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.15)
gender1	2.46 ***	2.45 ***	2.24 ***	2.05 ***
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.16)
age	-0.07 **	-0.07 *	-0.07 *	-0.06 *
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
length	0.21 ***	0.21 ***	0.21 ***	0.21 ***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Category2	0.84 ***		0.43 *	
	(0.10)		(0.18)	
Category3	-1.14		-1.11	
	(0.74)		(0.75)	
CategoryEU2		0.84 ***		0.25
		(0.10)		(0.20)
CategoryEU3		-0.03		-0.42
		(0.07)		(0.25)
gender1:Category2			0.61 **	
			(0.21)	
gender1:CategoryEU2				0.79 ***
				(0.23)
gender1:CategoryEU3				0.41
				(0.26)
N	12823	12823	12823	12823
AIC	7481.51	7484.51	7475.41	7477.44
BIC	7526.27	7529.26	7527.62	7537.11
Pseudo R2	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14

All continuous predictors are mean-centred and scaled by 1 standard deviation. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Figure 2: Analysis of sex effect (gender 0 – man / gender 1 – woman) with classical subset of portfolios male (1) /neutral (2) /feminine (3) – Count Variable (wcount)
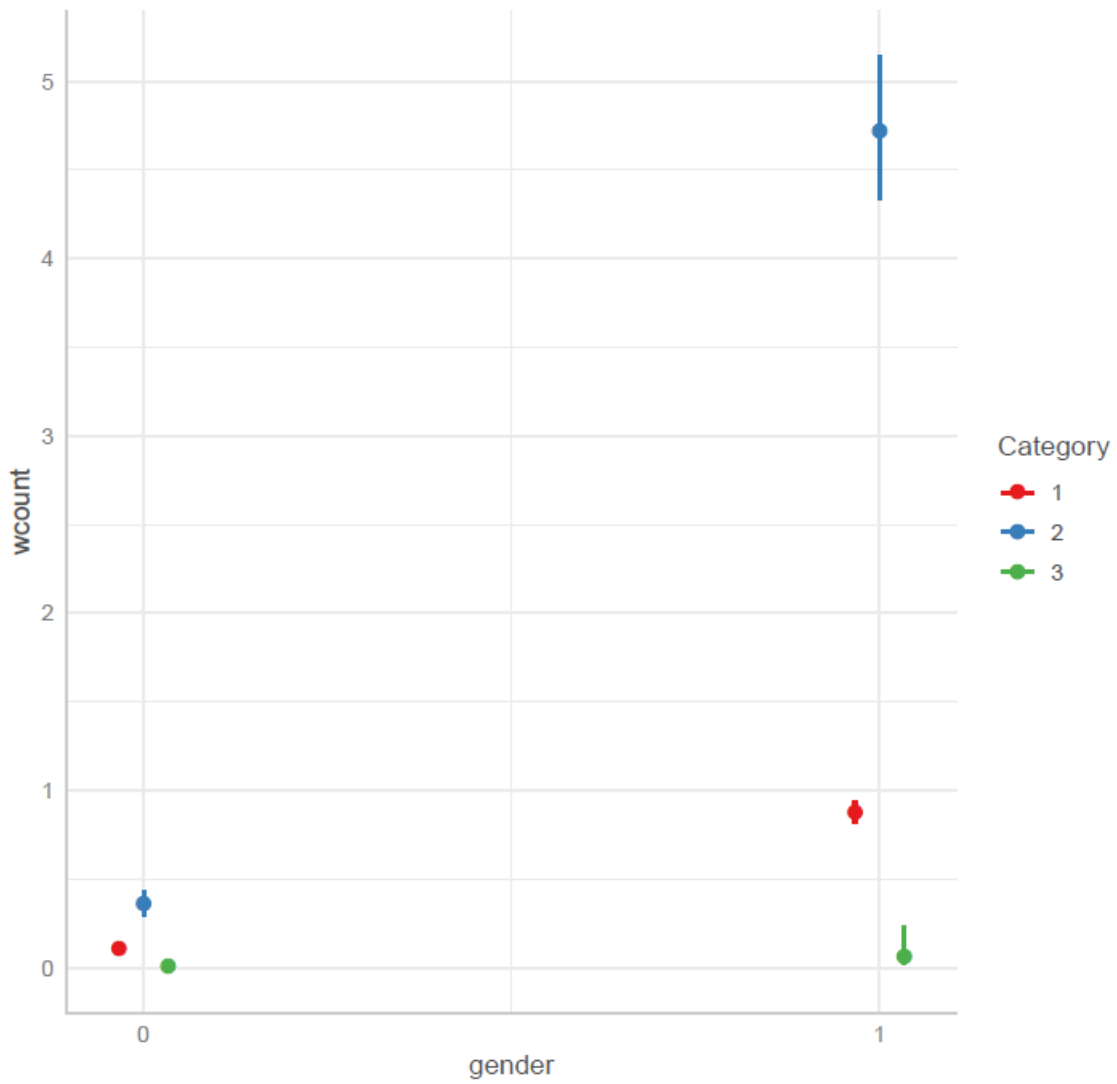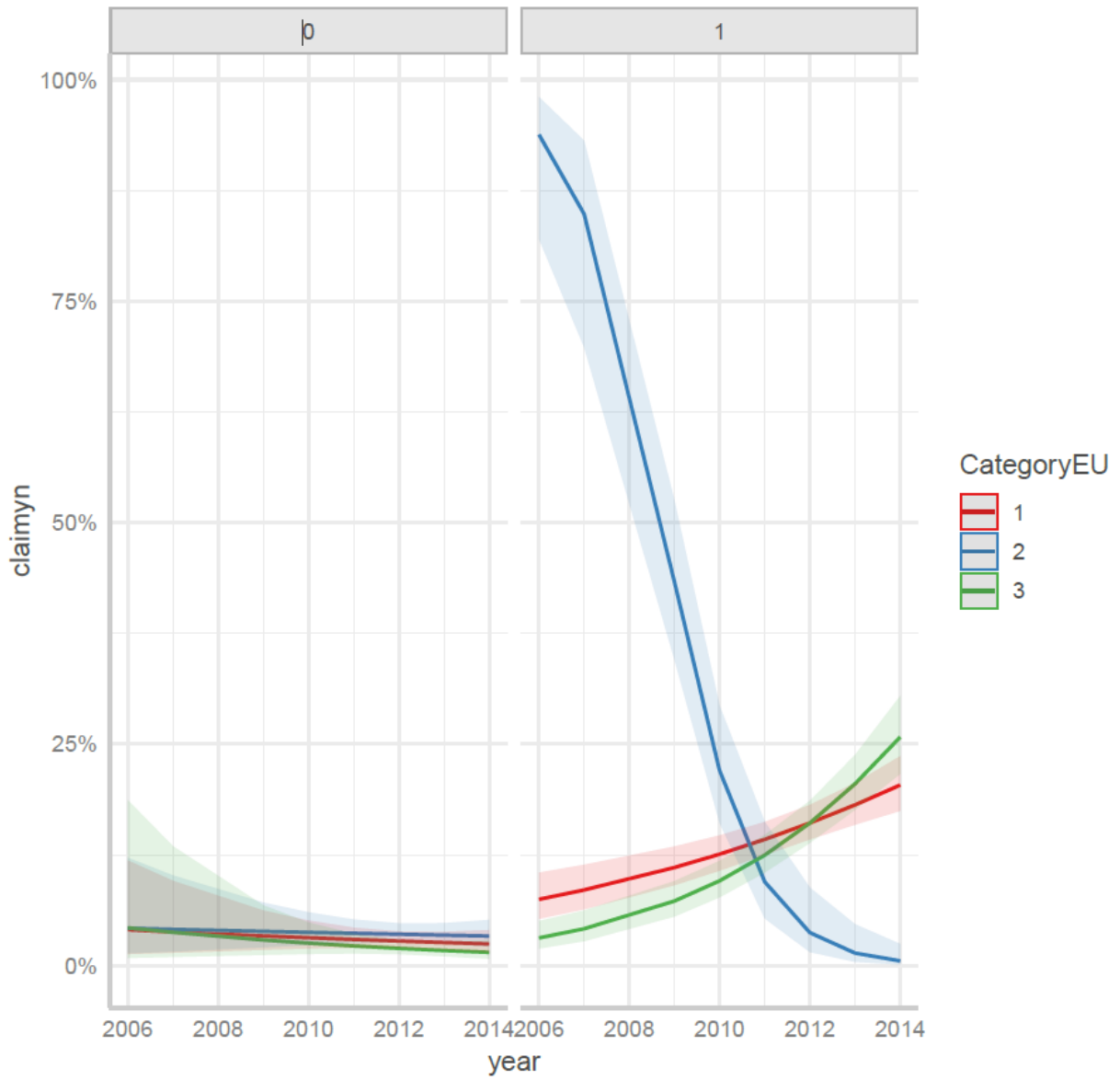
Table 4: Poisson Regression on Count of Representative Claims on behalf of women

	Model 1	Model 2
(Intercept)	-2.84 ***	-2.63 ***
	(0.11)	(0.13)
gender1	2.61 ***	2.38 ***
	(0.11)	(0.13)
age	0.04 *	0.05 *
	(0.02)	(0.02)
length	0.43 ***	0.42 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
CommissionBarroso II	-0.51 ***	-0.51 ***
	(0.03)	(0.03)
CommissionJuncker	-0.97 ***	-0.94 ***
	(0.07)	(0.07)
CommissionProdi	0.42 ***	0.42 ***
	(0.04)	(0.04)
CommissionVon der Leyen	-1.83 ***	-1.81 ***
	(0.21)	(0.21)
Category2	1.04 ***	
	(0.13)	
Category3	-2.69 ***	
	(0.71)	
gender1:Category2	1.00 ***	
	(0.14)	
CategoryEU2		0.83 ***
		(0.15)
CategoryEU3		-0.61 **
		(0.23)
gender1:CategoryEU2		1.24 ***
		(0.15)
gender1:CategoryEU3		0.64 **
		(0.23)
N	12823	12823
AIC	34453.99	34490.32
BIC	34536.04	34579.83
Pseudo R2	0.72	0.72

All continuous predictors are mean-centred and scaled by 1 standard deviation. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Figure 3: Marginal Effects of time-series based on multiplicative interaction model on logistic regression.

	Model 1	Model 2
(Intercept)	-3.78 ***	-3.95 ***
	(0.15)	(0.12)
gender1	2.07 ***	2.25 ***
	(0.16)	(0.13)
age	-0.07 *	-0.07 *
	(0.03)	(0.03)
length	0.26 ***	0.26 ***
	(0.03)	(0.03)
CategoryEU2	0.26	
	(0.20)	
CategoryEU3	-0.40	
	(0.25)	
year	-0.13	-0.17
	(0.15)	(0.12)
gender1:CategoryEU2	-1.83 ***	
	(0.51)	
gender1:CategoryEU3	0.40	
	(0.26)	
gender1:year	0.34 *	
	(0.15)	
CategoryEU2:year	0.07	
	(0.20)	
CategoryEU3:year	-0.09	
	(0.25)	
gender1:CategoryEU2:year	-1.88 ***	
	(0.33)	
gender1:CategoryEU3:year	0.32	
	(0.26)	
Category2		0.43 *
		(0.18)
Category3		0.01
		(0.97)
gender1:Category2		-2.01 ***
		(0.50)
Category2:year		0.10
		(0.13)
Category3:year		1.94 ***
		(0.19)
gender1:Category2:year		-2.01
		(1.77)
N	12823	12823
AIC	7315.24	7320.52
BIC	7419.67	7410.03
Pseudo R2	0.17	0.17

All continuous predictors are mean-centred and scaled by 1 standard deviation. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.